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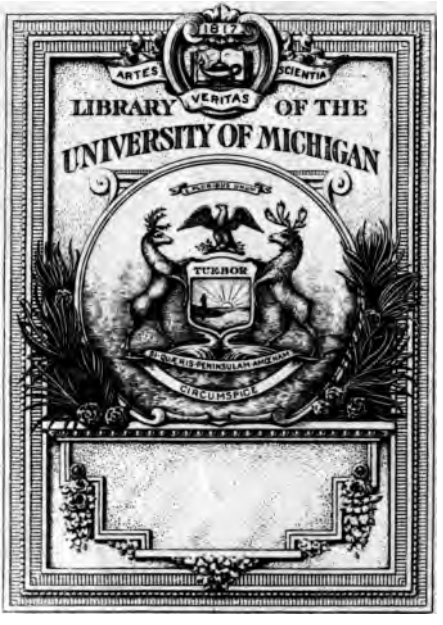
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MODERN SCOTTISH POETS.

TO OUR READERS.

"Deal gently with us, ye who read,
Our largest hope is unfulfilled;
The promise still outruns the deed,
The tower, but not the spire, we build."

THE introduction to our last issued volume was the thirteenth we have written for this work. We were superstitious enough to feel that it taught us a lesson in humility—reminding us of the story about an old Highland minister who on one occasion preached to Dr Blair's fashionable congregation in the High Kirk, Edinburgh. The sermon was on "The Duty of Humiliation." "And now, my freens," said the preacher, "in the Thairteenth place, I shall proceed to set before you a Thairteenth reason for Humeeliation. And it sall be a reason taken from the seeance o' anawtomy. We are informed by them as is skeeled in the seeance o' anawtomy that we have got a' the puddins o' a soo, but e'en now I ask you a', if we have got a' the puddins o' a soo, if this is no a Thairteenth reason for Humeeliation, and a reason taken from the seeance o' anawtomy."

Thus were we led to realise that, when we entered on our task, we must have had little idea of the

anatomy of poetry—of the vast nature of our undertaking. Each successive volume and preface showed this more conclusively, and we might have sunk under the burden of our weakness had we not been strengthened by Coleridge's words:—"Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward. It has soothed my afflictions, it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments, it has endeared solitude, and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me." Such, we doubt not, is the experience of every true poet. They are encouraging words to all who write neither for fame nor fortune, and we do not know that we could have chosen a better text.

To all forms of literary art Voltaire's maxim applies—that the most effective way to weary the listener (and the same applies to the reader) is to say all that can be said upon a subject. We have said a good deal, but we feel that we are still far from having exhausted the theme of modern Scottish poetry. Every writer is not equally impressed with the greatness of his self-imposed task, for we have just heard that a very ambitious work has been undertaken by Professor Angelo de Gubernatis, of Milan—nothing less than a "Universal History of Literature." One volume is devoted to a critical account of the lyric poetry of all peoples and countries; but its title to anything like completeness may be estimated from the fact that the only examples cited from the authors of Britain are from Tennyson and Miss Rossetti. He does not appear to know anything of, or to have explored the rich lyric field of Scotland.

Having promised to give a parting "foreword," we purpose, necessarily in a somewhat rambling way, to refer to the rich and luxuriant nature of the lyrical genius Scotland has produced, to poets and poetry in general, to some of our experiences during the past

sixteen years, and to the important part the study of poetry plays in mental and moral culture.

When our Fourth Series was published, the *Glasgow Evening Times*, in the course of a lengthy article, said that the work would be one that would "be valuable to the historian of the future, who will seek in it authentic literary hints of the times which he wishes to expound and present to the students of his day. Just as a country is not alone known by its peaks, so neither is the literary state of any age known by its greatest authors. There is a literature that has the grandeur of oaks; there is also a literature that has the sweetness and the humility of grass; and, after all, the simple literature that is grass, has, in its place, as fair a value as the literature that is oak. The work is full of those peculiarities of thought and fancy which spring out of, and make perpetual appeal to, the interests and affections, the wit and humour of the common life of the common people living in the common day. Even the humblest 'makker,' not less than the greatest, is born, not made; and it has come at length to be admitted, even by pride, in spite of itself, that the God who made King David and Dante, also made, at a later date, all the humble makkers, many of them nameless and unknown, who sang for us that delightfully simple and varied literature which enriches the Ballad Bible of our Scottish Israel. It is put beyond a doubt that the poetic voices of modern times are much luckier than those of an earlier date. No poet now sings without being heard. If it be true that no single prophet has ever yet prophesied for all men, equally true is it that even the greatest poet has failed to steal into all ears. This is no hardship to the great; it is some comfort, however, to the lesser voices, whose happy privilege it is to sing to the innumerable groups of folk who are pleased and content with humbler songs.

"The race of song and ballad-makers are more fortunate than their brethren of earlier times in the increased opportunities opened to them by the art of printing for having their productions sown broadcast over the country. How vastly different it is now in such matters is attested by the publication of numberless collections of miscellaneous verse which in other times would have died in the utterance. Mr Edwards has taken immense trouble to raise scores of poets from local obscurity into the light and glory which can only be secured in palpable volume form. The humblest song and name is carefully preserved with the best and the highest. . . . . The work is starred by names already well known in shining poetic fields, and it contains songs and ballads which will give their little-known authors a fair place among the heaven-born 'makkers' of their country. We could pick out many names for high praise in the volume — names that have already sung themselves into popular affection, and others that are beginning to catch the ear, like larks in the early dawn. There is still in Scotland a fine, fresh, and vigorous undergrowth of poetry."

We have always felt an interest in what an author had to say about his book, although there is reason to believe, and we have heard it asserted, that "the every-day reader does not read prefaces—in fact regards them rather as a nuisance than otherwise." We think a preface is almost as necessary to a book as a title. There are, in truth, few volumes which can safely be sent into the world without a word of exposition. It may be urged that poems scarcely need prefaces, inasmuch as they may be said to explain themselves. But that cannot be said of every poem. Certain it is, that had not such prologues been the rule instead of the exception, as they might possibly have been, the world had wanted many a delightful bit of verse.

Among the most lasting passages in literature are some of the prefaces that have been written. And this is all the more remarkable, because probably there is no species of composition so difficult to write. It must not be too short, or it will seem flippant; nor must it be too long, or it will bore. It must not be too assertive, or it will excite sarcasm; nor must it be too humble, or it will suggest depreciation. And yet a bad preface is, all things considered, much better than none.

Doubtless some will sneer at our formidable array of modern poets. The cynicism is unjust. The future will decide more kindly; besides, every great man is obscure at first, and if some of our poets cannot claim the highest honours for their singing, they, at least, deserve respectful regard and grateful encouragement from their fellow countrymen. Sometimes the mavis can please when the nightingale fails, and the same may be said of all the other humble varieties of Nature. Indeed, the grand and the sublime in Nature and Art must be partaken of sparingly and at wide intervals, to be enjoyable and beneficial, whereas simple beauty, it has been said, is a wholesome, all-round perpetual meal, like porridge. How few have, for example, honestly read through "Paradise Lost," and honestly enjoyed it. Almost everybody knows and heartily enjoys our simple national songs.

In our labours we have again and again felt encouraged by the fact being acknowledged that we were engaged in a work that, in this department of literature, is useful in the high-pressure life of the present day, when the mass of the people have no time to read through and study all the works issued. "Never were the works of Shakespeare, Scott, Milton, and others," says the *Spectator*, "less read than now, and yet never were trite quotations from these authors more numerous or commonly known."

The demand will always regulate the supply, and, judging by the enormous and the increasing number of books, quotations, concentrated lives, short histories, gems from the poets, and such-like volumes, turned out almost daily, the demand must be steadily on the increase.

The lyrical genius which Scotland has produced has excited the surprise and admiration of the civilised world. That a climate so ungenial, and a soil so sterile—destitute of all the luxuries and many of the necessaries of life—and, above all, a people divided and subdivided into hostile clans and adverse races—the Gael and the Saxon, the Anglo-Norman and the descendants of the Scandinavian freebooter, the moss-troopers of the Border, and the caterans prowling about the mountain defiles in lawless security—that individuals should arise from such a community, from age to age civilizing and humanising their ferocious contemporaries with the sentiment of undying song, and the pathos of divine music, is, indeed, matter of astonishment, and has done more for the cohesion of Scotland as a nation, in the most trying times, and under most difficult circumstances, than any other event which the historian can trace.

> And see the Scottish exile, tanned
> By many a far and foreign clime,
> Bend o'er his home-born verse, and weep
> In memory of his native land,
> With love that scorns the lapse of time,
> And ties that stretch beyond the deep.

With commingled blood and tears, the Scottish muse in 1286, mourned the demise of our good king Alexander III. She waved the silver cross of Scotland in triumph over the victory of Bannockburn and poured forth an ode, which, says Fabian, was after many days sung "in daunces in the carols of the maidens and minstrels of Scotland, to the joyful proofes and disdayne of their foes."

Younge wemen quhen thai play,
Sing it among them ilk day.

James the First "possessed great talent in poesy and music," and we are told that, after the calamitous field of Flodden, "songs of lamentation, set to dirge-like melodies, were wailed through the length and breadth of Scotland, literally steeping a nation in tears."

But we must not trench on the ground so ably covered by Mr Macbeath in his "Introductory Essay" in this volume. In this exhaustive and carefully prepared treatise he proves that poetry and love of song are indigenous to Scotchmen, and that poetry and music have been national characteristics for centuries. He shows that the poetic element has been a living power in Caledonia since it was both "stern and wild"—from the days of Thomas the Rhymer to, say, John Stuart Blackie; and, what is more to our purpose, that it "gains increased strength and vigour with age."

"The Church may demur to my proposition," says David Vedder—a name revered by all lovers of Scottish song—"nevertheless I do aver, that song performed the part of a powerful auxiliary in her life-and-death struggle with Rome. All the poets of that stirring period seem to have pointed their ordnance against St Peter's. The burning satire ran from mouth to mouth like electric fluid, and the fabric of a thousand years, which had been cemented by so much blood and treasure, toppled and fell! When the battle was won, however, the Reformers tried hard to kick down the ladder by which they had been assisted to their elevated position—to proscribe song, to stifle the bards—to lower them in the eyes of the public, as a class of idle sorners given to the 'unprofitable trade of poem-making.'"

In the words of Chambers—"poetry and music,

till the early part of last century, lived a very vagrant and disreputable life in Scotland, but they flourished in the hearts and the souls of the people, for they were susceptible of the strongest impressions from poetry and music." But the tide once turned, Scottish song became fashionable. The court, the theatre, the opera—all rung with Scottish music. In course of time a galaxy of illustrious names, as Mr Macbeath in his essay has shown, illuminated the lyrical firmament of Scotland, until there arose, in brightness unutterable, to deluge our land in a flood of light, that great star of Song, Burns, whose magnificent lyre resounded over the globe in warm accord with all hearts, and for all time—the cadence of which can only cease with

"The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

Since the demise of the hierarch of Scottish lyrists, bards of illustrious name have sprung up from time to time. Hogg threw a halo of lyrical glory over our country; Cunningham, a kindred spirit, increased its breadth and augmented its radiance; Tannahill gave us songs sweet as the western summer breeze, whispering over a bed of rustling reeds; while Motherwell melted us to tears as by a mother's tenderness. Many other names that have enriched our poetical literature might be added; and of the living tuneful fraternity, who have sung with pathos, simplicity, and humour, with rough vigour and polished sweetness, we do not need to remark here—their name is legion, and to select names from the many would appear partial and invidious.

No sentiment, we believe, was more frequently expressed a number of years ago than that the age of poetry was past. So generally was this believed that the lovers of poetry, it is said, had ceased to look for a coming man, and had accordingly turned

with new and lingering fondness to the eloquent musings of men of former generations As advancing civilization compelled the deft and light-hearted fairies to quit Scottish ground, so, it was feared, had the tuneful Muses been forced to withdraw before the ungrateful roar of steam. And as the green-coated chiefs were so shocked by the sacrilegious violation of their haunts that they agreed to depart in a body from so thankless a nation, so it was believed that all the Muses had acted in concert, and had determined never to permit the modest warblings of song to be "coughed down" by a locomotive, or to be developed to the accompaniment of a railway whistle. Sometimes, it is true, hopes were excited by seeing a wooer of the Muses astride his Pegasus, whipping and spurring heroically, but on closer inspection it was found that this was not the real Pegasus he had mounted at all, but an animal of mean descent, which answered the spur—not by a bound into the heaven of invention—but by a patient whisk of the tail, or by the utterance of a sound by no means distinguished for melody. In recent days, however, these apprehensions that the inspirations of the olden time had gone by have been dispelled. Many, amid the whirr of wheels, have taken up the ancient harp and struck bold notes, and the coy inspirers of song are proving that not even the din and bustle of this mechanical matter-of-fact age can prevail to resist their impulses when and wheresoever they choose to impart them.

We do not believe that nature scatters her blessings with more profusion in one age than another; or that, like an unfeeling mother, she robs one child of its portion to enrich the other. We think the difference lies in the cultivation. The most fertile fields will, if neglected, be overrun with weeds; and the bramble will choke the luxuriance of the floweret.

Many a tract, seemingly oppressed with the curse of sterility, has, by the assistance of art, teemed with the fruits of cultivation. The human mind is that luxuriant field, rich in the gifts of nature, but requiring the fostering care of education to raise the imperfect seed to the maturity of the full-grown crop.

It is no rare matter now-a-days to meet with literary working men. We, nevertheless, always feel that a special interest attaches to their efforts. We realise not only the peculiar difficulties and disabilities with which they have frequently to contend through limited education and unrefined surroundings, but also the advantage they have in writing of the poor and working orders from actual acquaintance and personal comprehension of their aims and needs. Both reasons tend to procure a cordial welcome when one of these toilers finds a voice to prove that labour is not necessarily a bar to culture and poetic feeling, and that environment is, indeed, not all-powerful in fashioning heart and mind.

In this volume is an alphabetical list of the counties which are the birthplaces of poets treated in the preceding volumes. By way of a summary we might here note that Aberdeenshire claims 106 (Aberdeen 35); Argyleshire 15; Ayrshire 72 (Ayr 8, Kilmarnock 11); Banffshire 15; Berwickshire 21; Bute 2 (both in Rothesay); Caithness 4; Clackmannan 9; Dumbartonshire 13; Dumfrieshire 29; Elgin or Moray 6; Fifeshire 68 (Kirkcaldy 7, Dunfermline 13, Cupar 8); Forfarshire 130 (Montrose 8, Forfar 11, Dundee 53, Brechin 12, Arbroath 14); Haddingtonshire 6; Invernesshire 19; Kincardineshire 18; Kinross-shire 4; Kirkcudbrightshire 19; Lanarkshire 144 (Glasgow 99); Linlithgowshire 13; Midlothian 141 (Edinburgh 106, Leith 14); Nairnshire 1; Orkney and Shetland 14; Peebleshire 12; Perthshire 64 (Perth 17); Renfrew-

shire 45 (Paisley 15, Greenock 13); Ross and Cromarty 7; Roxburghshire 29; Selkirkshire 12; Stirlingshire 22; Sutherlandshire 2; Wigtonshire 5.

The professions, trades, &c., include, amongst others, the following:—Artist, 12; blacksmith, 7; bookseller, 15; butcher, 1; clerk, 6; commercial traveller, 8; compositor, 5, and newspaper manager, 1; dancing master, 1; detective, 2; draper, 14; editor, 20; education, 5; engineer, 11; factory-worker, 14, overseer, 3, and millworker, 4; farming, 22; gardener, 12; grocer, 9; journalist, 22; law, 22; librarian, 5; literature, 16; medical, 23, chemist, 4; mining, 6; ministry, 121, missionary, 3, and prison chaplain, 1; musician, 8, and music-seller, 5; painter and decorator, 15; police force, 7; post office service, 17; printer, 12; professor, 7; publisher, 8; railway service, 18; molecatcher, 1; shoemaker, 16; soldier, 11; tailor, 19; teaching, 68; and weaving, 15.

Not to speak of towns, there are few villages which cannot boast, if not of a heaven-born poet, at least of a pleasing rhymer whose feet touch the border-land, and who only just miss the crown. We would be the poorer every way for the loss of our humble rhymers; for do they not hallow domestic life by their sweet homely lilts, and they make us all the better by singing of hedgerows and lanes, spring flowers and autumn tints—and, above all, of the joys and sorrows of the ingleside. They are the poets, in a humble way, of the home and the affections, and by their thoughts life seems to grow more refined and softer, and our love of art, of flowers, and of music increases.

The facilities afforded by the modern press has done much to foster and develop the poetic gift, and the opportunities thus afforded has been embraced by all classes. The "rhyming fraternity" are brethren—"a' John Tamson's bairns," and claim kinship with

"Come all you tender Christians
I pray you now draw near;
A doleful lamentation
I mean to let you hear."

But it did not then follow that one heard a doleful lamentation, for they mostly ended rather pleasantly. "A Scribbler" sent a large selection of very weak material, and modestly concluded his letter thus:—

If you will just hint, and the same state in print—
In your work of very great fame—
What you think of my rhymes, I'll write you at times,
For "Scribbler" you see is my name.

We have incurred the ire of several rhymsters for presuming to abridge some of their pieces, and one, who accused us of punctuating wrong, waxed indignant over a comma appearing at the end of a line instead of a semicolon—a mere matter of opinion. "You have altered the sense of my verse," he wrote, "not as if with a *hand*, but a hoof, and that brutally stupid."

Here is a writer who defies criticism. His own opinion of his productions is that "Their adamantine merits will never be perturbed by the undervaluing or vilifying breath of inadequate critics—if they be tame, dull, and frivolous, let them cease, unlamented from the public eye, and go uncoffined to an early grave."

"If I am not mistaken," wrote another, "these pieces would really have graced your volume. But, though you are the judge, I think you are mistaken—and prejudiced." Another disappointed one is cruel enough to say—although we endeavoured to reason with him kindly, and humbly tried to point out his shortcomings—"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, for you have acted disgustingly, and I must be plain with you. You would not like to be thought

a shuffler, but you seem to have no objection to be *very like one.* I am a man not easily sat upon, and I venture to say that selfishness, which will not pay in the long run, *is* the cause of your refusal. I had no great wish to shine in your work at all, but I consider you have no writing in any of your volumes like mine."—This latter assertion is quite true, and it is evident that there is nothing like having a "*guid* conceit o' yersel'."

The contributions, whether in prose or verse, are often wanting neither in logic nor fancy, and are sometimes sarcastic. Here is the note to "The Table," a blank verse poem, in twelve cantos: "It must prove an acquisition to the literature of the age. It has long been a desideratum, and many have already hailed it with enthusiasm. It has strength of feeling, as well as power of thought and a facility of expression. We venture to say—and we put our foot boldly on the assertion—that there is little, if anything, to compete with the solidity of reasoning in the following passage, which occurs in the fifth canto.

> Five times 5 are 25; five times 6 are 30;
> Five times 7 are 35; five times 8 are 40."

Here is evidently the contemplation of suicide:—

> I know it is wrong, but I'm bent on the notion,
> I'll throw myself into the deep briny ocean,
> Where mud-eels and cat-fish select me for diet,
> There soundly I'll slumber beneath the rough billow,
> While crabs without number will crawl o'er my pillow.

We have received numerous "Laments," one in particular under the *nom-de-plume* of "A Squatterer on Parnassus"—a lamentable production, beginning with the words—

> "It enraptures me much for to hear the birds sing."

"David," has not yet attained to the excellence his great namesake, though in the course of fifteen months he has written on 291 subjects, consisting upwards of two thousand verses, of which the following is a sample :—

> Oh ye black clouds keep up the air,
> An' let the lovely sun shine clear ;
> We wish for much of his bright rays,
> To hasten on the harvest days—
> There is great need of a good crop
> To give poor wretched creatures hope.

We have, however, repeatedly met with different and more cheerful experiences, especially in the matter of love ditties. Here is a sample from a happy up-to-date—telephonic—courtship :—

> First turn the little handle,
> Next ring the little bell,
> Then listen for the music
> Of the voice you know so well.
>
> Merely coo in the receiver,
> And in accents sweet and low
> Breathe the tender name of Jenny,
> I will answer back "Hello !"

Other disagreeable experiences could have been added, though these are comparatively few when the hundreds, if not thousands, of correspondents we have had are taken into account. We have during these sixteen years formed many valued, valuable, and lasting friendships, and these include many young writers, who in the course of years have felt that they owe a debt of gratitude to one who, much to their chagrin at the time, may have been the means of restraining them from needlessly making themselves ridiculous. Such repulses, in the case of a person of real talent, will only prove a stimulus to greater and more successful exertions.

A London journal recently asserted that the writing and printing of minor verse is "a deplorable waste of energy." But some editors are inclined to be harsh. For example, Mr Peeweep is told that he cannot write poetry, and never will. "The only respectable thing in his work is the name of the publisher." Or, again, "this is one of the many works which daily issue from the press at the author's expense, and from the sale of which he may expect to realise a handsome profit and a glorious reputation. It is dedicated to Professor Gumption—by his permission we shall take the liberty to bury it, in the words of our author:—

> 'I charge thee with my dying breath,
> To take me where my children (M.SS.) sleep,
> And lay me where the willows weep,
> Where songs of birds e'er greet the ear,
> And streams run murmuring sweet and clear,
> Where mountain flowers shall ever bloom
> Upon my low unheeded tomb.'"

Although it is currently stated by certain people that most poets are not of "the most milky dispositions," it is only right to keep in mind that some criticisms are perfect examples of that superfluous operation of breaking a butterfly on the wheel, and should prove a salutary warning to poetical sinners with an itch for type for all time coming. Some take the critic's advice—they go in peace, and sin (in print) no more.

Regarding true criticism in general, it was well put by Professor Saintsbury recently in *Blackwood*—"It will always remain true that the way in which an author has done his work is the main, if not the sole province of the reviewer or critic. Has he found an allowable, an agreeable, a fairly orderly conception of his subject? Has he shown diligence and accuracy in carrying this conception out?"

About the end of the last century critics were held in extreme disrepute. These were the days of Southey's "seven pounds and a pair of breeches" for six months' reviewing.

Here are some "Observations by a Scathing Reviewer"—"When I look at the severed heads I have a misgiving, not that I have cut off some budding Shakespeares, but that the implacable assertion of a critical judgment is, after all, inhuman. Why should not these little books have their day, and cease to be, like the summer flies? There is no obligation to read them; and, if you have a severe taste in literature, you can gratify it by leaving them uncut. Why should they not give as much pleasure and as many pence to their authors as are consistent with the semi-literate good-nature of the public? And if their merits are trumpeted beyond all reason—well, there will be no echoes a hundred years hence." One wishes that reviewers would take this advice to heart and abstain, as we have said, from breaking butterflies on wheels.

In this connection a Glasgow editor, in the way of mildly sarcastic consolation, says that "there are men who would most willingly give a hundred guineas for a page of 'Hamlet' in Shakespeare's handwriting, and we can hardly guess how much would be given for the grand old ballad, 'Sir Patrick Spens,' in the original manuscript. Of course, it does not require such evidence to prove that the poets, though dead, yet speak, and even more effectively after death; because their personality is then freed from those local and social limitations which rendered them unacceptable to the booted and spurred and silken respectabilities of their time. But there is a new method by which poets and other worthy people may speak after death. As a matter of fact, their veritable voices may still be heard. They have only got to speak into a machine which will repeat their words fifty years after they are

reduced to ashes. That machine is, of course, the phonograph."

Speaking of the apparent harshness of editors and critics we read recently a letter of advice from a writer of long experience to a young Oxford man who had chosen "Letters" as his profession. After referring to the "balance, measure, arrangement, lucidity of thought, clearness of style," and such-like expressions, the following, generally sound, advice is given:—"I wish you to understand that you will find hundreds of men—ay, and of women too—at the system of whose education, if you knew it, you would doubtless turn up your classical nose, finding a market for their wares for which you may search in vain. . . . Do not, then, imagine that you will succeed by the particular elegance of your writing alone. There will be rivals all round you to out-Herod you at this game; or your choicest epithets and most nicely balanced periods may be tossed into the waste-paper basket to make room for

> Some stupendous
> And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
> Monstr'—inform'—ingens—horrend—ous
> Demoniaco—Seraphic,
> Penman's latest piece of graphic.

Literature, you must almost remember, is in the eyes of nearly all editors, and must be, before all things, a commercial speculation. They are not the patrons, but the clients of the public taste, and the dictates of that taste, though they may sigh as critics, they must as editors obey."

Other editors, again, while keenly critical, are anxious to impart useful information to well-meaning writers who possess natural gifts, requiring only experience. Sometimes their productions exhibit poetic fervour, while they ruin a piece by lapses into unmistakeable commonplace. They may not have

learned that a sonnet, or, indeed, any other verse, is worthless unless it is, at least apparently, spontaneous. The "well-filed line" is a work of art, and unless labour is bestowed upon it the poet's mind must have undergone such training as to make his craft a second nature; and if the subject chosen be in its treatment incompatible with this condition it had better be let alone.

Editors are often asked by aspirants "how poetry is written"—whether it comes by "inspiration" or slow labour of the brain; whether it is necessary to study the mechanical construction of verse, or whether the idea springs, Minerva-like, full-formed from the Jovian brain; whether poets seek for rhymes in dictionaries, or find them waiting on the point of a pen. A well-known author has declared his opinion that by the careful study of the mechanism of verse and the rules governing it, any person of ordinary intellectual capacity could become a poet. To some extent we differ from this opinion, although we consider that verse may be written in this way if one has the patience to grind it out, but not poetry. We might as well say that any person can become a musical composer who learns the rules governing its construction. Poetry—the poetry which touches the hearts of the readers—must first surge through the heart of the poet independent of any rule, until it reaches his brain, where it shapes itself into form, just as an ocean billow sweeps with unrestrained force and in unpremeditated fashion until it breaks on the shore in glittering spray or mountains of beautiful foam. Correct rhyme, and proper accent and an ear for rhyming sounds, must be born with the poet, or else he is no poet, just as true time and a correct ear must be born with the true musician.

We have met with rhymsters who "hear no true witnesses," who listen with effect to no omens, delicate

or palpable, who receive no message from any sphere beyond that of sense. Possessing, often enough, the accomplishment of verse, but wanting the true poet's dowry of imagination, the gift and faculty divine, the gift of seeing a deeper meaning than lies on the surface of common things and common events, they spin their webs of rhymed platitudes, and elaborate acres of verse that will help no one to pursue a better or more valorous career, or to lead a healthier or happier life. We have had many samples submitted exhibiting little to differentiate them from ordinary prose, except a certain number of rhymes, and a determined poverty of expression. They failed to remember that rhythm, in a sense, is the first conceivable thing in nature—that it is that which, indeed, seems to regulate the universe, and to which it is evident almost every animal is susceptible. We are sure our poets know—most of them—that a baby a few months old will sway its body in exact time with the rhythm of the melody which it hears from its mother. Some of the writers, again, failed to conform to the most elementary rules of verse-making. In the case of others, we found the poetical merit not very high, although a simple and sincere spirit pervaded their thought; while all that could be said of some is, that they "wrote at the request of many friends."

There is a good idea of truth in connecting what is called *genius* with forceful habit and tireless activity. We allow that there are one-song and one-poem poets. Yet one may write a single poem and give it the touch of immortality; a line may linger as long in the ear of the world as an epic or a lyric. But, as a rule, the man who writes one perfect verse adds to it many of a kindred beauty, and he who paints one great picture covers the walls of the gallery. Genius is energy quite as much as insight, and whether it dwell in Shakespeare or in Michael Angelo

it is always the mother of mighty works as well as of great thoughts. In men of genius the same tireless activity, the same forceful habit, are often found; nothing daunts them; nothing subdues them; they make all things tributary to self-expression. There is an element of inspiration in all great work which is never wholly at command; with the greatest as with humbler men, it ebbs and flows. "I am always at work," said a great artist, "and when an inspiration comes I am ready to make the most of it." Inspiration rarely leaves such a man long unvisited.

We know that all minor writers are not good writers, and doubtless many of them will outlive every line they have written; but it is a fact that many of the songs and ballads which have enshrined themselves in the hearts of the people, and that are likely to live with the language in which they are written, have emanated from our minor singers.

Even in these days there is some risk that minor writers may be under-rated. Because their excellence is not that of the more imposing contemporaries, their merits are in danger of being overlooked. Lamb did for literature an important service when he discovered the beauties hidden away in the neglected pages of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and, says a writer on the subject of minor poetry, "we are indebted to various hard-working societies, and to scholarly and laborious editors for a substantial increase of intellectual store. The great works of genius are the prominent peaks of the range, along which there are varieties of the type that individually provoke and amply repay special and close examination."

The impression made on one after a perusal of the simple productions of our poets is, in effect, as was once said of Coleridge, that the words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice,

variety, and position of the vowel sounds they become magical. "The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at their piping." Of course we have found rhyming sparrows who mistook their weak chirpings for song.

Many men and women in our time do write verses that are admirable alike for feeling and expression, for sentiment, if not for creative power. And if we call these writers "minor poets," we are perhaps doing no injustice to them, nor to the art they practise. And this lessens the difficulty of the critic, who is often in sore straits to decide whether there is genuine poetry before him, or whether it is the production of a mere versifier. Take courage, therefore, ye humble ones, for hear what was lately said for your encouragement — "It is the curse of greatness in poetry to be forgotten, or, at all events, not to be much remembered, while the songs of the veriest pedlar, weaver, cobbler, or barber are sung in the streets, in rooms-and-kitchens, in workshops, in palaces, and in the remotest isles and huts of the Empire. They will, in fact, persist in being immortal, in spite of the critical gravediggers. This is the heavenly consolation and reward of poetic humility. Out of the mouths of tramps, beggars, spinners, weavers, and ploughmen is poetic wisdom perfected. It is Nature's doing."

Indeed, the majority of our writers have supplied us with productions which show that they feel that the great tendency of poetry is to form an alliance with our best affections, and that its purpose is to carry the mind above and beyond the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life; to lift it into a purer element, and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. As Dr Channing puts it— "Poetry reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of early feeling, revives the relish

of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature by vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings, spreads our sympathies over all classes of society, knits us by new ties with universal being, and through the brightness of its prophetic visions helps faith to lay hold on the future life."

Like James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, who ascribes a separate vitality to his compositions, the productions of some appear to carry them on. He was wont to wonder, even more than others did, at his own work. "Aye, ye're a learned man," he sometimes said to Christopher, "there's nae doot aboot that, wi' yer Virgils, and Homers, and Dantes, and Petrarchs. But aiblins ye mind you fragment upon the sclate that ye despised the ither mornin'; eh, man, sinsyne, it's ettling to turn oot the very best thing I ever composed, an' that's no saying little, ye ken."

It has been truly said that our sweetest song birds never soar high. The mavis, the blackbird, the lintie, and other songsters who trill out their sweet notes in our woods and groves all keep near the ground, and their song is short and unsustained. The skylark is not a sweet singer—he is a brilliant artist that dazzles you with his power and *abandon* rather than feeds your heart with the soft, dreamy music which soothes and fills it with joy.

We often hear the poet described by the metaphysician as a man of genius, as possessing a lofty, a powerful, or lively imagination, and by numerous other fanciful epithets; yet, after all, the class of persons who acquire the truest insight into the capabilities and the spiritual workings of the poet are his ordinary readers, who, themselves endowed with healthy intellectual and moral constitutions, are in

reality deeply touched by his glowing thought. Their views are not enchained in the meshes of any subtle impracticable theories. They see in him one whose intellectual glance stretches farther and penetrates deeper than their own. Indeed, it is a singular fact in the history of literature that it is the popular mind of a country which forms the truest and most lasting criticism on its poetical productions. Long before the critics of the last and the beginning of the present century had stamped their approval on the works of Burns, his songs were sung with enthusiasm in every cottage and lordly home in Scotland. They had fanned the flame of love and friendship in thousands of hearts, and cheered the drooping spirits of many a wayfaring Scotsman in distant lands long before the conventional critic had described their true merits.

The poet does not arise among his countrymen to represent any new form of sentiment, but, on the contrary, to impress them more deeply with the true nature of that which has existed and exists around him.

It is often asserted that the tastes of the Scottish people are not at all artistic, and that their commercial interests have received a more careful training than the finer parts of their nature. In the opinion of some this may be the case, and the root of the matter seemed to have been touched recently by Lord Balfour of Burleigh when he pointed out that the long centuries of almost continual anarchy, the striving of the greater and lesser barons among themselves and against the throne, and the terrible poverty and semi-slavery of the great mass of the people were enough to account for the neglect of art. "There was," he adds, "a more potent cause—one which it would have been hazardous to put forward not so many years ago, but one which, in these more enlightened days, can be at least whispered. That the pre

Reformation Church of Scotland was artistic in the mediæval sense is testified by numerous ecclesiastical edifices—most of them, unfortunately, in ruins—throughout our country. Even in the rudest times these were held in respect, and without a doubt their fine proportions and beautiful details would have a civilizing effect in the minds of a rude peasantry and of the turbulent barons. But the Reformation came. It swept away abuses, and in the course of time a better state of things was instituted; but in its immediate train disaster followed. 'Pull down the nests, and the rooks will fly away' was the watchword. In too many cases the 'nests,' the only artistic monuments of which Scotland could boast, were ruthlessly pulled down, and the 'rooks' were banished. Surely the obnoxious birds could have been banished without so much destruction. The revulsion of feeling against the previous state of things was so great that to be an artist—a painter of pictures—was to be a vagabond; to be an actor, an emissary of the Evil One; to be a poet, an idler from whom a terrible account would be required at the latter day. The finer work of which mankind is capable was tabooed; bran and muscle were in every instance placed above brain." No doubt the indignant and virulent invectives of the muse had a powerful influence in bringing the abettors of tyranny and the mummeries of superstition into contempt, and paved the way for the happy change which followed the ever-memorable Reformation. Before then the lyre sounded "the noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood." Silence and solitude reposed sweetly together, undisturbed save by the howl of the faithful dog, who had escaped the carnage, or the expiring groans of the trusty menial, who had received his death wound in the defence of his master, and was just expiring in his blood. The Reformers, however,

diffused among the peasantry a nobler spirit, until every hill became vocal, and every stream murmured in verse. To pursue the paths of peaceful industry, to live and to love became the subjects of her panegyrics.

Soon after the curtain of the nineteenth century arose, thoughtful men began to fear that, in the outburst of industrial fertility, the coming generation would consist of men whose various capacities might, in various degrees, range between the multiplication table and the ledger. But it was found that literature and art were not to languish and decline, and the sun of poetry and those stars which are the affections and aspirations of the human soul were not to pale before the gas-lamp and the crucible. It is by the affections of the human heart and by the faculty to love and to revere that nations and families live, and the true poet thrills us with these life pulses.

Thus times change. Intellect, under whatever form it is developed, is now regarded with respect; while bodily strength and commercial enterprise have suffered nothing by the change.

An immense change has taken place in the condition of the literary world within the current century, and more particularly during the last thirty years. Above all, perhaps, has its influence been observable in relation to poetry. Periodical literature is a production of this century, in all its existing phases, from quarterly reviews to penny magazines, and newspapers may even justly be accounted the growth of the same recent era—those previously published having been scarcely more than mere gazettes, recording opinions rather than bare public and business facts. Of late this field has been the outlet for the ebullitions of youthful poetic genius.

The influences of full-grown periodicalism extend

now to all who can read and write. It entices within its vortex those who exhibit an unusually fair share of early literary promise, involves them in its multitudinous and multifarious occupations, and divides and subdivides the operations of talent, until former prominent identity or great literary individuality is destroyed, both in work and workers.

Is it not the case that a literature of this description forms the very best possible evidence of the advancing civilization of recent days, and much valuable matter is through it put forth, to the lasting benefit of society?

Before we can thoroughly understand a piece of poetry we must have gained some knowledge of the ideas which are conveyed by words; we must endeavour to learn to feel the minute distinctions of feelings conveyed by different words, and arrangements of words. Substitute gradations of light for words, and the same will apply to painting, in gazing at which we must endeavour to set aside the mere story, and give ourselves entirely up to the wonderful effect of colour and form, for only thus can the picture produce on us the effect intended by the poet-painter. Sometimes we are apt to forget, however, that beauty consists quite as much in the absence of disturbing elements as in the presence of attractive ones. The art of *leaving out* is important, if not everything. You have but to chip away the unnecessary pieces of a marble block and a statue remains.

Without doubt, the sense of beauty is in these days increasing in the human mind, and we are becoming more capable of seeing the beautiful and enjoying it. Indeed, with many it has become a science and a culture, with a language of its own and formulated principles. But still the beautiful for each one depends on an inner vision, or an indefinable taste of

the soul; and the deepest sense of beauty—that which makes it a possession of the spirit—grows out of that sympathy with the unseen life of the universe in which we live and move and have our being, which we call faith. The hidden Creator sustains all, shapes all, and is the reality of all. The fascination of the beauty of nature is its Divine mystery. The atmosphere through which vision sees its most subtle forms and colours is the consciousness of a Divine presence. The fulness of the earth's beauty, as much as the fulness of its produce, is the gift of God.

Much is said by critics on the subjects of diction and movement, of truth and sensuousness. From these qualifications, no doubt, one has to be guided in seeking to find the substance and matter of the highest type of poetry. Aristotle observes that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing "a higher truth and a higher sensuousness." "There can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can, therefore, do us most good," said Matthew Arnold in "Essays in Criticism" (2nd series), "than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and apply them as a touchstone to the other poetry. Of course, we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find we have acquired a sense enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there. Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what, in

the abstract, constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples—to take specimens of poetry of high quality, and to say :—The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognised by being felt in the verse of the master than by being perused in the prose of the critic." On the other hand, it has been pertinently remarked that by the study of popular poetry, or what is written with the true air of genius in dialect form, we are brought nearer to the life of a people than, in these hurried days, we can be by travel.

A true poet must, in addition to harmony, imagination, rhyme, and rhythm, be endowed with "sincerity and depth of vision," the common sense and experience of the man of the world, the keen and profound insight of the philosopher, and an intuition bordering on the prophetic. In a word, his must be the breadth of vision of one to whom it has been granted, albeit "it may not always be required of him to dwell upon the heights," at least to breathe there long enough to judge men and things from the highest standpoint of all. As was recently said by a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, "the poet is no photographer or shorthand writer, to give us mere scenes and speeches as they actually occurred. He sees into the life of things—and then so handles those things as to make them represent the life better than they—the materials supplied by Nature—can." In every poet there are, as it were, two beings, the man who sees and thinks and feels, and the artist who provides a beautiful form for the outcome of the man. But though every poet must be both man and artist, there are many who only give just enough form to their thoughts to ensure their immortality, while there are others whose feeling for beauty and har-

mony is cultivated at the expense of their humanity. Thus the poet unveils, discovers for us, ordinary mortals, truths which we could not discover for ourselves, and puts these in forms which we can apprehend when so shown to us, and which are so beautiful that we are attracted by their beauty before we appreciate their truth and goodness. For though no poetry deserves the name if it be not true and good, its primary purpose is and ought to be to give pleasure; and in giving pleasure, to awaken in us the germs of truth and goodness.

Hazlitt says—"Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions—that fine particle within us that expands, rarifies, refines, raises our whole being; without it man's life is poor as beasts." We consider such definitions, by great minds, are worthy of much consideration. Victor Hugo declares that "an idea steeped in verse becomes suddenly more incisive and more brilliant—the iron becomes steel." "The mere study of poetry," says P. W. Darinton in his "Poetry as a Means of Mental and Moral Culture," "is an important element in the true education of every man," and this ought to be kept in view, not only in the training of the young, but throughout life. There is no time when the study of poetry is unsuitable or useless, just as education and instruction are actually proceeding side by side from childhood to age. Not a few there are who consider poetry as a mere means of light amusement—its only end being to give a passing gleam of pleasure. We do not deny its use as a recreation, but we hold that it has far higher and more important ends to serve. Bacon says, in his pithy, pregnant way:—"Poetry may justly be esteemed of a Divine nature, as it raises the mind by accommodating the images of things to our desires, and not, like history and reason, subjecting the mind to things. And by these, its charms and congruity to the mind,

with the assistance also of music, which conveys it the sweeter, it makes its own way."

"Poetry is the impassioned expression on the face of science," says Wordsworth. George Macdonald says—"After reading in a botanical book about a certain plant, you go to some green nook in a wood and see a yellow flower. You exclaim: 'A primrose!' and a something comes over you which you cannot express; that is the meaning of the definition of Wordsworth. Science is the scaffolding; poetry is the house. It would be a dull world if it were all science. Yet geometry, the dullest of the sciences, has endless suggestions of poetry. Emotion excited by flowers came very near to love. But how can we love a thing that has no consciousness? Everything that lived and took to itself nourishment from the earth had some kind of consciousness, and he believed science was coming to that opinion. Science always followed close on the heels of poetry."

Milton defines poetry as "simple, sensuous, and passionate." Coleridge defines it as consisting of "the best words in the best places." "Enlarge this," says Professor Palgrave, into "the best words in the best places, for sense and sound and metre, and the definition will be complete. With such words poetry does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. The mind only—head and heart, but heart through head—is addressed by poetry." Again, we have Edgar Allan Poe saying in one of his letters—"Music, when combined with a pleasureable idea is poetry; music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose."

The foregoing gives us a glimpse of what poetry may be to all if it be carefully and diligently studied; and surely if these are the effects of the study of poetry,

it plays no unimportant part in mental and moral culture.

We should not allow our early love of poetry to die away. The world is prosaic enough to most men who have travelled as far as the hill summit of life, and we lose much delight, much refreshment, much mental and spiritual stimulus by neglecting to cherish the fair visions and high imaginings which poetry supplies. The tendency of the constant study of mere physical objects, of rigid and exact laws, is to materialize the mind, to confine the thoughts to the narrow bounds of the senses, and to deny the existence of anything except that with which the senses can deal. Dr John Brown says, in a comment upon some words of Ruskin: "I believe there has been no true discoverer from Galileo and Kepler to Davy and Owen without wings; these Nimrods of possible truth have ever had as their stoutest, staunchest hound, a powerful imagination to find and point the game." The study of poetry quickens the idealising power of the mind by clothing common objects with the light and grace of beautiful associations. This was Wordsworth's deliberate purpose. He says, "The principal object which I proposed to myself was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way."

The greatest poets of the world are said to be popular by a kind of sublime commonplace. They transform the common motives and passions of man's life into a higher meaning without losing their natural simplicity and obviousness. But this gift belongs only to the few. It is constantly present in

Shakespeare, and in Wordsworth at times. Nor is *it* always equally present even in those who have it. Others, again, are popular by artistic commonplace, if we may so call the expression of ideas of average quality, taking the standard from the audience to whom they are addressed, in a pleasing and appropriate form. Longfellow furnishes an almost perfect type of this kind of popularity. Skill and equability of execution are needed to redeem it from sinking into vulgarity, and failures, quite compatible, however, with temporary success, are many. There are others who have their own ideas and their own forms of imagination, but cannot express themselves in a universal form; and these though true, and it may be great, poets never become popular. The absence of the popular quality has many diverse roots and forms. It may be a stately elaboration of scholarship, as with Milton, or it may be, as with Shelley, a lyrical exquisiteness that lives in an air of its own, which the reader must learn to breathe. What is required for understanding the poet is not merely scholarship, or attuning oneself to a certain mood, but a subtle, intellectual sympathy, which nature may happen to provide, but otherwise must be compassed with more or less effort.

We have not a few proofs of the influence the writings of one poet has had over other poets. A notable example is that which is known to have been exerted by Coleridge's "Christabel"—an influence that may be traced on the genius of Scott, Shelley, and Byron. It was an influence that Scott acknowledged with all his characteristic frankness, and Byron, too, though with more reserve, for it was not his habit to acknowledge or perhaps to recognise such influences. "Christabel" was circulated in manuscript many years before it was published; and, recited among the poets, it made, especially on their minds, an impression that

proved an agency of poetic inspiration to them. Mr Lockhart tells us that the casual recitation of "Christabel" in Scott's presence so "fixed the music of that noble fragment in his memory," that it prompted the production of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." It was a great lesson to the poets, in that it disclosed an unknown, or at least forgotten, freedom and power in versification—a music the echoes of which are to be heard in the poems both of Scott and Byron. The grandeur of its imagery, too, moved the poets to whom it was made known, as in that sublime and familiar passage on a broken friendship:

> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary scene now flows between;
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been.

The poetic faculty is thus the idealising power of the human mind—that power which creates out of the materials already possessed new types or images; that power which we call intuition, and by which we are made capable of apprehending realities that are out of the range of the senses. How often have men of science, amid their close and plodding researches, been met with dim presentiments of great truths—grand generalisations, which have been the work of the imagination, leaping forward, and anticipating the slow processes of reason and experiment.

We thus realise the importance of the study of poetry, especially in the earlier years, as a means of cultivating the imagination. As Mr Daunton, from whom we have already quoted, puts it—"Even the most 'poetical' man may be convinced, by a little thought on the subject, that a faculty which has so important a part to play even in scientific research,

which is essential to the orator, the historian, the politician, is one which is worth cultivating."

The question "What will a child learn sooner than a song?" (or a rhyme of any kind) must ever be negatively answered; and so long as such continue to be the first things committed to memory, so long will they continue to form and to influence modes of thinking. The natural consequence is therefore that, a national character once formed, song is the most happy expedient for rendering it permanent. What has first awakened the admiration of youth can never fail to be the delight of old age, and hence the sire may be the means of inspiring the son with the same sentiments and feelings through a long line of succeeding generations.

The late George Gilfillan, in one of his eloquent speeches, once said—"When a man achieves a world-wide fame, where does the ray shine most brightly, and communicate its warmest glow? It is in the roof-tree of his birth, if that be still standing, and to the heart of his mother, if that mother be still alive. And on this principle those names of Scotsmen which have become household words in every clime the sun's broad circle warms, while admired with intense enthusiasm in other lands, are in Scotland, in their own mother's humble dwelling, cherished with a love with which no stranger can intermeddle. And what although Scotland should dwindle in the scale of nations, and be swallowed up in the great centralising gulf-stream which threatens to erase her nationality? There are 'livers out of Britain'; there are Caledonians 'o'er the hills and far awa''; there are mighty Scotch-sprung races in the American prairies, the Canadian forests, and the golden lands of Australia, in India and New Zealand, who shall continue to remember with pride and joy their connection not only with Scotland's hills and streams, but with

Scotland's mountain-like men and river-like literature —with her Wallace, her Bruce, her Buchanan, her Knox, her Chalmers, her Burns, and her Scott—who shall teach their children after them to reverence their memories and to read their writings."

And yet to succeed in writing verse adapted to the unsophisticated mind of childhood is a difficulty generally admitted. To be simple without being silly—to embody wise thoughts in simple but chaste and elegant words—and to influence the youthful mind through the affections, by engaging pictures of love and home, of truth and gentleness, is an achievement of no mean order. He must possess the deep-toned joy of the Poet who feels all the beauty of the earth and the sky pulsing through his nerves and raising his heart to quick intuitions and melodious numbers; the joy of the student when the luminous outlines of truth begin to shape themselves before his mind in connected form and startling beauty; the mystical joy of a love which has just won an answering love, the deep-toned joy of the mother in the dawning life of her child.

Taking this general principle along with us, the feelings and sentiments—said or sung—thus transmitted are, however, not always worthy of such sacred preservation. We incidentally referred to our young friends of the "wailing" or "greetin'" school, mainly with the hope that our remarks might encourage them and lead them to realise that they will see things ten years hence in a very different light from what they do at present. They will probably do more and write less when they obtain an extended knowledge of the world and their own position in it. Maudlin lamentation will be given over for elevating themes, and then farewell to doleful lamentations written with the stump of a pen on a damp hillock, and wrestling with the sobbing

muse that the world may be told how bad it is—reminding us of the rough-spun stanza of Burns :—

> Alas ! my roopit muse is hearse,
> Your honours' hearts wi' grief 'twould pierce
> To see her sitting ;
>
> Skreichin' oot prosaic verse,
> An' like to burst.

Formerly lovers had a wonderful propensity towards dying, and had a pretty miscellaneous assortment of what either is, or may readily be converted into, the agents of death. Not only knives and poison and ropes, but also high rocks, peaceful rivers, and grand old trees were pressed into service, and mustered up in horrible array to soften the heart of the obdurate fair one. Even when all these were not sufficient, the terror of his ghost haunting her steps and hovering over her bed for a *thousand years* to come, was esteemed an expedient that could not fail to move her. But now he is generally fortified by the strength of his mind and a vein of general good sense. In a case of insurmountable aversion he relinquishes the pursuit, and consoling himself with the truthful adage—"There's as guid fish in the sea as ever cam' oot o't," he turns to a quarter where his attentions may be more acceptable, and afford at the same time a fairer prospect of future felicity.

We are told that the savage who deliberately roasts his helpless victim before a slow fire, or tears the living flesh from his bones, has his song of triumph. With perhaps pertinacious obstinacy, men hold up the more ancient and legendary verses of their own country as superior to that of every other. It is the vehicle of their more ardent emotions, and, as it were, is interwoven with their very existence. "The Irish strum," it has been said, "with its bulls and blunders ; the English doggerel in praise of bacon and buttered parsnips ; our

own lilts of love adventures, murders, and ghosts, are all charming to the ear which has been early accustomed to them on account of the many associations which they have always the power to awaken." A mother or a grandmother may have been accustomed to chant a particular stanza ; or it was a dear departed friend, or perhaps the verse was heard under such peculiar state of feeling that the person never hears it again without being ready to exclaim—

> "I feel a power thou canst not feel,
> I see a hand thou canst not see."

That a very considerable degree of the veneration with which we regard even our best and most popular songs arises from this cause, it would be foolish to dispute. And after every reasonable deduction on this head has been made, a Scotsman may still be proud of his national song, and we may safely compare it with any other, nor fear to suffer by the comparison.

The Hon. G. W. Ross, Minister of Education, Toronto, at a great meeting held recently to do honour to one of our bards—Alexander Maclachlan, Amaranth, Ontario—in the course of an eloquent speech referred to the fact that Maclachlan (and the same may be said of many of the poets we have had under review) may have neither the keen insight into the human heart, nor the accuracy of diction, nor the wide sweep of imagination, nor the purity of thought, nor the freshness and vigour which characterise the great poets of the present century. Yet "every star is not a sun, every mountain is not an Alp, every flower is not a rose." Most of our singers have simply been those who

> Have tried to learn from Nature
> What our little life can mean,
> And to catch some wav'ring echoes
> Wandering from the world unseen.

Estimated by the three great tests of the true poet —love of nature, love of the ideal, and love of country—their claims to an honoured position can be conclusively established. Love of country is a characteristic by which the bard, in all ages, has won his brightest laurels. In fact the chief vocation of the ancient bard was to sing the praises of the heroes of his country, and to inspire to deeds of valour and of daring in order that his honour and renown might be enhanced. Ossian's heroes would have no meaning but for this purpose. Sir Walter Scott's words never possessed more fire than when he described the man without love of country as a man who died

Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

And how beautifully Burns' great heart welled out when he wrote

Oh, Scotia, my dear my native soil.

It is clear that the glory of popular poetry, while retaining what may be termed its local fascination, rises into the universal. Planted like a tree by the river of a nation's life, it rises above the mist and smoke of the valley atmosphere, and flings its boughs into the sunlit sky that vaults the world. The main facts of human life, the grand aspects of physical nature, are recognisable all the world over; and the poet of a neighbourhood, if only he is sufficiently imbued with poetical genius, and sings of what he sees and loves, will become a poet of the race. The poetry of Scotland, so widely connected with the noble instincts, the kindly affections, the heroic impulses, and the exalted aspirations of mankind, will be accepted as a treasure wherever human heart answers to human heart.

Professor Blackie, in one of his works, treats of the value and significance of local and popular poetry, as illustrated by that of Scotland, in contradistinction

to universal poetry. He says—"The songs that please the great mass of the people are the songs that flowed most directly and most potently from the heart of the people; and whosoever wishes to know the people, must know and love their songs. If, as Richter, with his usual wisdom, said, the way to a mother's heart is through her children, and the way to a people's heart is through their mother-tongue; the utterance of this mother-tongue which goes most directly to the popular heart is the popular song; and whosoever has to do with the people will find that a single well-timed verse from a popular ballad will prove more effective to point his address, and strengthen his influence, than the most weighty sentence from an infallible Aristotle or a universal Shakespeare. Nor is this without reason—the people do not feed on soap-bubbles; the songs which they sing are not pretty fancies or dainty conceits, but they have a root in fact, a growth in experience, a blossom in the dramatic incidents, and a fruit in the ripe wisdom of life. The Scottish songs are not the songs of Ramsay, or Burns, as men with a special personality to reveal, but the songs of the Scottish people, of whom Ramsay, and Burns, and a host of others were merely the spokesmen for the nonce. Individual genius has its sphere of exalted influence among the sympathetic few, but unless its productions be, like Shakespeare's, as popular as they are peculiar, they never can compete in interest with the poetry which is the glowing expression and the typical embodiment of the higher life, and the notable fates of a whole people. This poetry, though it cannot boast the rarity, the novelty, or the originality of a few extraordinary and brilliantly abnormal men, is, like the heather on the hills and the birch in the glen, the more agreeable, the more catholic it is in its diffusion, and the more characteristic in its graces."

On the subject of the influence and power of Scottish song, we feel that we cannot do better than quote a communication from our countryman, Mr Andrew Carnegie of New York, in the course of which he says:—"Scottish song holds sway over us because it is true—the embodiment of our surroundings, our hopes and fears, trials and triumphs. It is home-made—a product of our hearths and hearts, without foreign mixture or affectations. It comes from nature, and has less of art in its development than any other body of song. From within, outward, and from nature, upward, has been its course. The folk-song of a romantic, poor, struggling people, harrassed by internal and external war, harried, overborne, and yet always asserting itself as a thing of the spirit; therefore in its life immortal! A sad, sad song in the minor key, but ever with the lilt of hope and a strain of heroic and indomitable purpose running through it, like a golden thread drawn from the rainbow of a future, when all should be made glad and the chosen people come to their heritage. Of all the precious legacies that can come to a nation, such folk-song as Scotland possesses ranks among the best. It refines, softens and intensifies the national character, and makes of every Scotsman two men: one practical, shrewd, level-headed; the other, touched with the rays of poetry and romance (beyond those of any other nation). It was a Scotsman who said—'Let me make the ballads of a nation and I care not who makes the laws.' None but a Scotsman could have rated so highly the influence of song, for in no other nation does song so permeate and form the national life. Take from that stern land of the north its legacy of song, and Scotland would cease to be Scotland, and the world would no longer be able to distinguish Scottish traits in its people. The Scotsman would not know himself; for the folk-song of his country has so entered

into his being that, robbed of it, he would no longer be Scotch. The burn without its wimple, the heather without its glow, the breeze without its whisper, and the lark without its trill—such would be the Scotsman bereft of poetry and song!"

And it is not out of place to show further, from a well-known authority, what strangers think who visit our country and our people. Dr Talmage says:—"Next to my own beloved country give me Scotland for residence and grave. The people are in such downright earnest. There is such a roar in their mirth, like a tempest in the Trossachs. When on the platform a speaker must have his feet well planted, or he will be overmastered by the sympathy of the audience. They are not ashamed to cry, with their broad palms wiping away the tears, and they make no attempt at suppression of glee. They do not simper, or snicker, or chuckle. Throw a joke at a Scotsman's ear and it rolls down to the centre of his diaphragm and then spreads out both ways, towards the foot and brow, until the emotion becomes volcanic, and from the longest hair on the crown of his head to the tip end of the nail on the big toe there is paroxysm of cachinnation. No half and half about the Scots character. A Scotsman seldom changes. By the time he has fairly landed on his feet in this world he has made up his mind, and he keeps it made up. If he dislikes a fiddle in church you cannot smuggle it under the name of a bass viol. And I like this persistence."

"One does not require to travel very far south of the Tweed," says another discerning visitor, "to find a considerable sprinkling of people who entertain two somewhat extraordinary ideas regarding the Scotch. The first is a pettish sort of opinion that it were well if the Scotch people confined themselves to Scotland. The other idea charges the Scotch people with a want

of hospitality. What has given rise to this impression I cannot at all imagine, unless it be the fact that the average Scotchman, especially abroad, is very pushing and saving, and there are undoubtedly some who are just a little bit grasping—qualities, however, which are not peculiar to Scotchmen. Nor do I think these qualities are incompatible with a genuine spirit of hospitality. Speaking from personal experience, I must say that the kindly and warm-hearted attention with which I was treated, in many cases by people to whom I was an utter stranger, was, to my eye, a splendid and sweeping reply to the insinuation to which I have referred. If Mr John Bull or anybody else goes amongst the Scotch in a surly overbearing manner he will certainly meet with disappointment if he expect the Scotch people to embrace him; but if he will try to imagine for the moment that he is *not everybody*, and that the Scotch people are *somebodies*, he will stand a very fair chance of being treated in Scotland in as hospitable a manner as in any country under the sun."

At the risk of being accused of having been carried beyond our original purpose, and thus owing our readers an apology for digressing, we feel that we cannot close without a reference to the use of "Oor Mither tongue." Regarding what is called "The Scottish Dialect," and in these days, "The Kailyard tongue," so cultured and learned an authority as Lord Moncrieff once said that, "although rough in its syntax, abnormal in a great degree in its structure, exceptional also in its pronounciation, its materials have been so welded together by the blows of giants, that it now presents a mass so compact, so available, so forcible as to be equal to any language that was ever spoken or written. Like the granite of the north, it requires for its proper use both labour

and skill, but when these are applied by the hand of genius it is susceptible of as high a polish as the more classic marble of the south, and perhaps may be destined to a future still more enduring. Less sonorous than the Latin, less copious than the German, less noble than the French, is it not a noble vehicle of thought, capable of expressing all that the intellect can conceive and the heart can feel in a manner alike terse, dignified, and rhythmical." This is a long quotation, but we cannot help farther referring to the fact that his Lordship goes on to say, in effect, that in the Scottish dialect are preserved, both as regards vocabulary and pronounciation, some at least of the characteristics of the English language in the earlier stages of its literature. "There are traces," he says, "to be found even in the dramatists of the period of Elizabeth that many of those distinctive words are gems reft from the coronet of English literature and preserved amidst the mists and mountains of the north." It is pleasing to think that, if we have borrowed much from our relations in the south, the English education in broad Scotch is considerably advanced now, and our friends can enter with full enjoyment into our humour. There was a certain amount of truth in the saying of the witty divine that it requires a surgical operation to get a joke into the head of a Scotsman. Yet it was no doubt English jokes that were meant, and these required the point of a scalpel to introduce them. English wit moves more rapidly than the deliberate Scot can always follow. His humour is dry and slow. The real humour and pathos of Scotsmen is to be found in the delineations of Burns and Scott. The writings of the one have made the writings of the other more appreciated, better known, and better understood—in fact household words. We have seen that the cradle of Scotch poetry—the writings of Dunbar—

was in motion one hundred years before Shakespeare. Dunbar wrote "The Rose and the Thistle"—an emblem of the future union of the crowns and kingdoms, but a hundred years before it. From 1620, however, until Ramsay struck the Scottish lyre, the harp of Scotland was almost mute. This doubtless was owing to the union of the Crowns, for our language and idiom then ceased to be a national language and became a dialect. One can well judge of the difficulty of a Scotch poet making his way in royal circles after the union by the wonder with which the court of Elizabeth must have received the new monarch—speaking broad Scotch. But the time of awakening came, and Burns taught his countrymen what strains could be evoked from Scotland's musical but deserted lyre. He painted that true Scottish character which he loved so well with exquisite skill and discriminating fidelity, full of lights and shadows, of contradictions and anomalies, homely prudence and practical sagacity, combined with high courage and tenderness of heart, ardent love of the very soil of Scotland, and yet stronger love of adventure and ambition to rise which led so many Scots abroad in pursuit of fame and fortune. We are disposed to accept as a compliment the assertion of a popular English writer, that where a woman or a child is concerned a Scotsman is a sentimental idiot! But we utterly repudiate the satire of Sydney Smith referred to above—for few will dispute that one of the most marked characteristics of our countrymen is a keen and living sense of humour, tempered and moderated only by a genuine spirit of religious reverence.

But we are afraid we tire our readers. The theme is evidently a larger one than at first we felt it to be. We, however, do not think that any apology will be asked,

or is needed for these lengthy and well-worded "testimonies."

Now-a-days, when the excessive division of labour is only counterbalanced by the intercommunication of ideas, shrewd Scotsmen are alive to the fact that to draw a cordon round one little corner of the earth would be what has been called an act of suicidal quarantine. They recognise that the world was made wide, and they travel by an instinct of intellectual preservation.

When once planted down, even in a barren land, a peculiarity of the thistle as a typically northern production is its power of getting on in the world, and of flourishing and multiplying in circumstances where other and ordinary plants would starve. George Eliot somewhere remarks that nettle-seed needs no digging. It would be equally correct to say that thistle-seed needs no sowing. Like its dandelion neighbours, the thistle sends off its seeds as wind-borne specks. The seeds are distributed far and near, and the race soon spreads in a kind of geometrical ratio. It is therefore no light thing to bring even one thistle-head into a new country, for the plant is an enterprising colonist. As has been remarked, "wherever the battles of the Empire are to be fought, wherever the greatness of the Empire is to be advanced, or the work of the Empire to be done, Scotsmen are there in the van to do it."

Lord Roberts, speaking in his "Forty-One Years in India" of the first breach made in the walls of Lucknow during the mutiny, tells us that a Highlander reached the goal first, and was immediately shot dead —"A drummer boy of the 93rd must have been one of the first to pass that grim boundary between life and death; for when I got in I found him just inside the breach, lying on his back, quite dead—a pretty, innocent-looking, fair-haired lad, not more than

fourteen years of age." With regard to his return south after the successful completion of the Afghan campaign, the gallant General, in another portion of the volume referred to, says:—"Riding through the Bolan Pass, I overtook most of the regiments marching towards Sibi, thence to disperse to their respective destinations. As I parted with each corps in turn, its band played 'Auld Lang Syne,' and I have never since heard that memory-stirring air without its bringing before my mind's eye the last view I had of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. I fancy I hear the martial beat of drums and plaintive music of the pipes. . . . I shall never forget the feeling of sadness with which I said good-bye to the men who had done so much for me."

In spite of their different origin and different languages Highlanders and Lowland Scotch have long been at unity in regard to national feeling. Both are intensely patriotic. As Buckle said, "the chief glory of the Scotch was that, next to their God, they loved their country. At the same time the Scotch were the most ubiquitous and cosmopolitan of people." It has indeed been said that a Scotchman was never more at home than when he was abroad. A well-known story is told of an English interpreter with a Turkish army who was expressing his dislike of the Scotch when one of the Turkish soldiers broke out—"Gin ye dare abuse my countrymen I'll gae ye a clout on the lug that ye'll no forget till Hallowe'en, for I'm Willie Forbes o' the Gorbals." Soon after this a Russian prisoner was brought in, and to the surprise of the interpreter, he and William Forbes turned out to be countrymen, and soon joined hands in singing "Auld Lang Syne."

The Scotsman is thus an ubiquitous creature. Go where you will you cannot entirely free yourself from his presence, or escape from the circle of his influence.

'The prophetic insinuation has been advanced," said an American at a "Caledonian" meeting recently, 'that if ever success should crown the hardy explorer's search for the North Pole, an Irishman will be found complacently enjoying a smoke on the top of it. We are prepared to stake our bottom dollar that if Pat hasn't the company of a Scotsman in his smoke, it's only because the Scot will have gone to investigate the nature of his surroundings."

In the field, in the council, in science and art,
With valour, with wisdom, and genius, thy part
Thou actest; and earth has no kingdom or clime,
Where thy sons do not further the promised good time.

"Go where you will," said Lord Tweedmouth recently at a St Andrew's banquet, "you will find a Scot, and generally you will find him somewhere on the surface. He is a settler in the backwoods of Canada, a squatter in the Australian bush, a tea planter in Ceylon, and the burr of his Doric is predominant in the South Sea Islands. He is a mining engineer on the golden Rand, and runs a coffee plantation in the wilds of Central Africa. How many Scotch engineers of the Macandrews type, immortalised by Kipling, are scattered over the globe, no one knows. The average Scot will go anywhere, and do anything, even to the length of commanding an army." To every corner of the habitable globe the Scotsman has thus penetrated, and wherever he has gone he has upheld the traditions of the race to which he belongs, and, by indomitable pluck and perseverance—the birthright of his country—fought his way to the front.

My loved Caledonia! still in the van,
For the faith of the Christian, the rights of the man,
Thy sons have been found, they have blazoned thy name,
And placed it on high in the temple of fame.

The word "Scotland" is synonymous with a stern

hardihood of nature, a tenacious independence of spirit, a straightforward bluntness of manner, a marvellous adaptability of character, all dominated by a substratum of thrifty enterprise—a trait which, perhaps more than any other in his character, is accountable for his success as a colonist.

It has been pointed out that Scotsmen think better than they can speak, and can speak better than they can write. If this is the case it ought to carry with it no discouragement, for, with some reservation, it means that we excel in what nature gives, and are deficient in that which an enlarged experience and a careful training should supply.

The mind of the Anglo-Saxon is large and wide, and its sympathies partake of the same character; the Scottish mind is deep and narrow, working in a more limited circumference, but it sees more deeply, and feels more intensely than the English. Hence Scotland is distinguished above all other countries for its strength and power in the personal and domestic affections. Hence, also, it is that our poets of the past as well as of the present have produced little poetry that does not bear or impinge on this relation, and that is not necessarily of the personal or lyrical description.

It is said of Sir Walter Scott that he loved no music but the music of his own land, and it moved his great spirit. Young says that once when listening to his favourite daughter, Mrs Lockhart, singing "Charlie is my Darling," his light blue eyes kindled, the blood mantled in his cheek, his nostril quivered, his big chest heaved, until, unable any longer to suppress the emotions evoked by his native melodies in favour of a ruined cause, he sprang from his chair, limped across the room, and, to the peril of those within his reach, brandishing his crutch as if it had

been a brand of steel, shouted out with more of vigour than melody—

An' as the folk cam' rinnin' oot
To greet the Chevalier—
Oh Charlie is my darling !

At a recent social gathering of Scotsmen in Jamaica, the chairman, in proposing the toast of "Scotia and Scotsmen," said the Scottish people differed in one important respect from other races, and that was "in the intensity of the personal affection they entertained towards their native country as a country. Other nations were very proud of their country, but, as a rule, this feeling of affection on the part of most other races was mixed up with some other sort of feeling. For example—The emigrant sings of Ireland, but as he does so he calls up in his mind memories of some blue-eyed Bridget or Kathleen Mavourneen. The Englishman was very proud of England, and he sang of England, but in his mind that dear name was associated with wooden walls, or, perhaps, with roast beef. But it was only in the Scottish song that they found people pouring out their hearts in adoration of Scotland, simply because it was Scotland."

Thou art dearest to me ever,
From my bosom banish never ;
Naught but death will e'er us sever,
Bonnie, bonnie Scotland.

Scotland, it has been said, under her many names—her wild and majestic mountains, her bonnie banks and braes, her wimplin burns and flowing rivers, all that we mean when we say Scotland—has called forth from the heart of her sons and daughters an ardent love expressed in simple poetry which has been equalled in no other country. What a number could be mentioned who have added to our literature perhaps only one or two songs or short poems, but these of the

richest and best kind. All that many of them have done, of the very highest beauty, might be printed and framed like a picture, but the frame should be of pure gold.

If you once win your way to a Scotsman's heart nothing is too good for you, and the generosity of Scottish hospitality is probably unequalled anywhere. The ties of relationship are sacredly observed, although sometimes this clannishness finds a quaint expression. A story is told of a beggar-woman who had wandered into a Scottish hamlet asking alms, but asking in vain. At last, in despair, she exclaimed, "Is there no a Christian in this village?" "Na, na," was the reply, "we're a' Johnstones and Jardines here."

On almost every conceivable and inconceivable subject the Scottish writers have allowed full play to their imagination, and the result has been made apparent in the beautifully-woven words of song, full of that something which grasps and holds by the subtlety of its tender spell that part of man's being where lie the mainsprings of life. Everyone knows that every glen, mountain, and moor in Scotland is celebrated in touching, heart-felt, and heroic song. These artless effusions have, of old, been handed down from generation to generation, and in the long winter evenings their recital were an ever ready source of instruction and amusement. No doubt, since printing became so general, the custom has now in a great measure died out. The mother of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in a conversation with Sir Walter Scott in regard to this, thus speaks :—"There was never ane o' my sangs printit till ye printit them yoursel', an' ye hae spoilt them awthegither. They were made for singing and no for reading, but ye hae broken the charm now, and they'll never be sung mair. And the worst thing o' a', they're neither right spelled nor right setten down."

With respect to Scotland and the sister country, it is a strange fact that Scotland has produced more genuine lyrical poets than any other nation, ancient or modern, and that England has produced fewer. No one can deny that England has her ballads, and otherwise she has produced some of the highest poetry, but she has only to a very limited extent succeeded in cultivating that terse, condensed form of poem which merely reflects the feelings, sentiments, interests, or opinions of the individual. In the strict lyric, intellectually, the field of view is narrow, but there is always depth under the surface.

The Scottish dialect, so simple, touching, and pawky, lends itself so naturally to song that the feelings of the illiterate as well as of the educated seem to flow more copiously into lyrical expression than is the case in other countries. We give many bright examples of the fact that the "Doric phrase" is still known– is still spoken and written in all its expressive purity and touching tenderness. As its "hamely worth and couthie speech" are endeared by many kindly associations of the past, and by many beauties and poetical graces of its own, and as our songs are said to be the richest gems in Scotia's literary diadem, let every true son of Scotland cherish and defend the brave words of the late Janet Hamilton—

Na, na, I winna pairt wi' that,
I downa gi'e it up;
O' Scotlan's hamely mither tongue
I canna quat the grup.
It's 'bedded in my very heart,
Ye needna rive an' rug;
It's in my e'en an' on my tongue,
An' singin' in my lug.

For, oh, the meltin' Doric lay,
In cot or clachan sung,
The words that drap like hinny dew

Frae mither Scotia's tongue,
Ha'e power to thrill the youthfu' heart
An' fire the patriot's min':
To soften grief in ilka form,
It comes to human kin'.

We need not here enter on the vexed question of the official and too general obliteration of the proper title "Britain," and the substitution of "England." This is a subject of ever-recurring interest, and it has been threshed and discussed to such an extent that everyone knows it by heart. We can only see that one advantage accrues from the impropriety—"England" is held responsible throughout the world for everything done that has wounded or displeased other nations; and so, as a patriotic speaker lately said, "it is a most convenient thing always to have a wicked partner in the firm."

In this busy world it is sometimes good to look backward, and beneficial to have the shield of our nationality occasionally burnished. It stirs our nobler feeling, and inspires us for fresh effort. It is this that has made Scotsmen what they are. As Lord Rosebery recently said in one of his speeches on Burns—We rejoice to find that Scotland which has always been the foe of the oppressor, the friend and shelter of the oppressed, is unchanged and unchangeable. "The Psalms of David and the songs of Burns—but the Psalmist first," were the last words of Professor Blackie, and they contain the secret of many a Scottish character. Strangers wonder at our worship, but they do not understand the enthusiasm exerted by a sympathy that survives time and the grave, or the pride that cherishes a national and immortal heirloom.

In conclusion, we would express the hope that it will be found that our original design has been in so

degree accomplished. We are sensible of many defects and shortcomings. These may, to a considerable extent, have been caused by the fact that we have only had snatches of time at our disposal to devote to the very heavy correspondence frequently required before one of the many hundreds of introductions to individual selections could be drawn up. Not to speak of the selection of representative pieces, the task of preparing authentic biographies out of so vast and so heterogeneous materials has been no light one. Keen perceptive effort as well as conscientiousness was constantly needed; but we would desire to have our readers recognise conscientious effort on our part rather than mere humble plodding industry.

In most instances special research has been required, and a vast amount of labour and an extensive correspondence have thus been necessary. The biographical notes, we have repeatedly had reason to believe, have enhanced the interest and usefulness of the work. Although we have made the selections according to the best of our judgment, without partiality regarding subject or writer, and with true integrity of motive, we found it impossible to give a place to every composition approved of. After much anxious thought, we were often reluctantly compelled to lay aside many a poem and song of distinct merit, so as to secure variety of theme in each representation. Nearly all the pieces are given by special permission, and the great majority of them have never before been published. Our warmest thanks are due to the writers for the courtesy with which they placed their productions at our disposal, and also to publishers and editors of works, as well as to many literary friends, whose frank and ever ready assistance in the matter of facts and material has during these years been invaluable and gratefully prized. Alas! not a few of those

writers who have thus ably given their assistance and advice are now separated from us by "the dividing river," and their letters, with words of cheer and encouragement and wisdom, are treasured by us—

> Letters, whose authors, a shining band
> Have passed to the unseen Spiritland.

They have left the little Now for the great Hereafter. Some of them may have lived and written in advance of their time, and, like others, have yet to gain the regard they deserved—

> Others, I doubt not, if not we,
> The issue of our toils shall see;
> Young children gather as their own
> The harvest that the Dead have sown—
> The Dead, forgotten and unknown.

We also desire to thank the Press for very generous approval, and we can never repay our indebtedness to the Public—at home and abroad—for their long-suffering patience. Without their countenance and faithful support we should have failed in our efforts to supply, in a cheap and commodious form, an exhaustive anthology of our modern national poetry. We began where the Rev. Charles Rodgers, LL.D., in his "Minstrel," and General Grant Wilson, in his "Poets and Poetry," left off; and to show that the same field of literature is interesting present-day workers, we might remark that, since the greater number of our volumes have been issued, at least five different County anthologies have been published.

Who that loves our native bards or their writings has not seen or heard of the "Poets' Corner" in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow? In no other country could such a collection of native poets be made. The late Bailie Wilson, who took such a warm and intelligent interest in our efforts, and to whom the credit of the inspiration of the "corner" was mainly due

once said—"The poetical literature of Scotland has long been recognised to be of quite unexceptional extent and richness; and probably no country is more rich—possibly so rich—in local or rural, or, as it is sometimes called, peasant poetry." The writings of these local poets over all the country, in addition to their literary value, preserve, in many cases, local dialects, and local customs and local memories which are fast passing away. Their poetry is no unmeet reflection of national feeling, and cannot be accounted unworthy the notice of any one who would study the habits and manners of the Scottish people. It stirs the feelings of national pride, and can melt the heart by strains of tenderness—kindling emotions, alike generous, gentle, and noble. The songs and poems of English writers do not possess the homely pathos and heart-touches of our Scottish lyrical poets. The imagination of English poets is less lively. It is surely worth while, therefore, that in one public library in Scotland there should be set apart a storehouse for these treasures, where they will be carefully kept and preserved for future generations of readers.

To whatever mysterious cause may be assigned the origin and growth of the poetic sentiment, we see that there have been real poets in almost every position and situation of life. Experience proves that extraordinary talent is the exclusive possession of no single class of men, just as no position in life or profession in business prevents real ability coming to the front. And although it must be allowed, apart from the advantages of education and favourable influences of position, that there are positions and professions more or less congenial to the formation and cultivation of the poetic mind, still we have the "witchery of song" from almost every station in life

A warm humanity melts all hearts, and so long as this is the essence of our national poetry—so long as Scotland retains one shred of its individuality, its memory of the past, its generous one-sidedness of attachment to its own history, to its own scenery, to its sons and daughters—so long will it love and cherish its poets and poetry. A galaxy of poetic stars has shone upon these realms, and though many of them have been eclipsed by death, they have gloriously bequeathed to the world an imperishable radiance.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, in a kindly notice of one of our early volumes, said—"A gathering of the best poems by lesser-known poets is a *real* boon to a busy public which has little time or inclination for sifting the chaff from the wheat." In the volume referred to we said that, although we meet at times with verses which seem to have been "manufactured as mechanically and systematically as some conscientious people keep their diaries," we have many poets who have sung themselves into popular affection; and all amply vindicate for Scotland the proud title of "The Land of Song." The line that lightens a heart, dries a tear, and makes a burden easier to bear, has a right to live.

D. H. EDWARDS.

Advertiser Office,
Brechin, January, 1897.

DECEASED WRITERS.

SINCE the Index of Names was printed, we have received information of the deaths of the following writers, the date following the name being the year of their demise :—

Anderson, John (vol. 7, p. 329), 1897; Anderson, John (vol. 7, p. 308), 1890; Barker, A. C., 1892; Bennoch, Francis, 1890; Blackburn, C. F. O., 1896; Calder, R. M., 1896; Carnegie, David, 1891; Chapman, Jas., 1888; Cock, James, 1822; Currie, James, 1890; Dalrymple, C. E., born 1817, died 1891; Fraser, Gordon, 1891; Grant, Robert, 1895; Hardy, Robina F., 1891; Hyslop, John, 1892; Innes, Robert, 1895; Kennedy, J. C., 1894; Knox, Wm., born 1789, died 1825; Moffat, James C., 1890; Murdoch, A. G., 1891; Norval, James, 1891; Robertson, Wm. (vol. 7), 1891; Rogers, Chas., 1890; Shelley, Wm., 1885; Still, Peter, jun., 1869; Walker, Wm. (vol. 8), 1891; Young, John (vol. 1), 1891.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

DAVID HERSCHELL EDWARDS,

BY ANDREW JAMES SYMINGTON, F.R.S.N.A.,

Author of "Harebell Chimes;" "The Beautiful in Nature, Art, and Life;" "Pen and Ink Sketches of Faröe and Iceland;" Editor of "Men of Light and Leading;" "Some Personal Reminiscences of Carlyle;" "Poems," &c.

DEEMING that this national work on "Modern Scottish Poets" would be incomplete without some notice of its gifted author and compiler, Mr D. H. Edwards, various friends have repeatedly urged him to allow a few personal details to be inserted in the last volume of the series. Diffidently yielding to their request, the present writer, with the aid of these friends, has prepared the following brief and inadequate sketch of a laborious and exemplary life; for, surely, "a life of such steady purpose is not without its lessons for young men who would be useful, and do good work in the world."

David Herschell Edwards, who, with good reason, has been called "the friend of Scottish Poets," was born in Brechin in 1846. His father was, for a long series of years, managing engineer to a well-known firm of paper-makers in that ancient city. David was

taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, in the Parish School. These old-fashioned parochial schools furnished tools, of which so many earnest scholars have made very efficient use in educating themselves and making their way in the world.

Mr William Harvey tells us that, after leaving school, David was apprenticed to the printing trade in the office of the *Brechin Advertiser*. In those days, the apprentice engaged in the office of a weekly country newspaper found, that he had to learn to work the press as well as to set the types, and, in addition, that the work was constant through a long stretch of hours. As a "P.D." all this fell to the lot of Mr Edwards, but perhaps it was good training.

After serving his seven years—the time required by the trade—he removed to Edinburgh for the further prosecution of his calling. Here he was employed for some time in the printing office of Messrs Oliver & Boyd, after which he returned to his native city, where he was re-engaged in connection with the *Brechin Advertiser*.

Mr Edwards early betook himself to literature, and, while yet an apprentice, was a frequent contributor, both in prose and verse, to the columns of the *Advertiser*, and the district press, as well as to several weekly and monthly magazines. He also attached himself to a literary society, in the town, which met at stated intervals for mutual improvement; a society from which many have gone forth who now occupy distinguished positions in different parts of the world. To this association, he read a series of essays on the folklore of Forfarshire, and on kindred topics—essays which won for him more than a local reputation, and gained for him many requests to deliver them as popular lectures—only a few of which, however, his natural diffidence allowed him to accept.

"When men, like Mr Edwards," says Mr Arthur

Guthrie, "determine on rising, they do not work only ten hours a-day, nor do they allow circumstances to master them; they work long hours, utilising the chinks of time, and they bend circumstances to their necessities." Twenty-five years ago he struck out for independence, by setting up for himself as a printer and bookseller in the town of Brechin, where he had worked as apprentice and journeyman. It was a humble beginning, but better was to follow. In addition to his occupation, he acted as local correspondent for various newspapers; and aimed at higher things by setting about the production of his first volume. It was entitled "The Poetry of Scottish Rural Life," and was a dissertation on the poetical writings of a Brechin bard—Alexander Laing, the author of "Wayside Flowers." Mr Edwards resolved upon being his own printer and publisher, but this could only be done in the face of many obstacles. He found that he could only print four pages at a time, as his fount of type, suitable for the purpose, was a small one. He went to work, however, and this is how it was accomplished:—"It had to be set up in the 'sma' hours' when others were carefully tucked 'neath the blankets, and the inking of the type with the hand-roller was even occasionally done by his wife, after the bairns were in bed." The little volume met with considerable success, a second edition being demanded, which is now out of print. After this work, Mr Edwards turned his attention to the history of his native city, and, in due time, "The Poetry of Scottish Rural Life" was succeeded by "The Pocket History of Brechin, and Tourist's Guide," which, in turn, was followed by "A Historical Guide to the Edzell and Glenesk Districts."

In 1879, Mr Edwards became proprietor of the *Brechin Advertiser*, and it need hardly be said that his own literary tastes were reflected in the paper,

He improved it, and thus made it more worthy of the locality, and of the patronage of the reading public. Then again, the facilities he now possessed suggested development; and so, shortly after taking over the proprietorship of the newspaper, he began *the* work with which his name will always be associated. At first it was tentative. He set himself to collect specimen verses by a hundred recent or living Scottish poets deemed worthy of remembrance. This he did, launching the volume into the sea of literature with the title, "One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets." Trembling, with fear for its success, he watched its progress, and was rewarded when he saw it receive favourable criticism and public appreciation. The edition was immediately exhausted; letters of congratulation showered in upon the editor, together with encouraging suggestions still further to prosecute the work. The public know what followed. Every few months since that time we have been awakened with the announcement of another series of "Modern Scottish Poets" being ready, until, as the result of his eleven years' gleaning in the field of poesy, he has given to the public no fewer than fifteen volumes. "When it is considered," says the editor of the *People's Friend*, "that each of these volumes contains about 450 pages of closely-printed matter, and deals with close on 100 poets each, giving an average of three poems to each poet, with a biographical sketch and a critical estimate, it will be seen that the labour involved in the preparation of the volumes must have been immense."

Neither for quality nor extent, does any National anthology approach that of Scotland. Mr Edwards' work notices and gives specimens of between fourteen and fifteen hundred poets, many of world-wide fame, and all of them exhibiting, more or less, genuine love of nature, kindly feeling, domestic affection, faithful

love, a laudable spirit of independence, patriotism, keen observation of character, or quaint humour.

Besides the production of his poetic miscellany, Mr Edwards has found time for other works, and among these is a learned and interesting introduction written for Miss Jeanie M. Laing's "Notes on Superstition and Folk Lore."

It was Mr Edwards' intention to complete this work by furnishing jottings of interesting reminiscences, incidents, interviews, and correspondence, encountered in his laborious quest of material, during the progress of the work, extending over the last dozen years; to give obituary notices of poets included in his volumes, but who have died during that period; and, besides an exhaustive index, to write an essay on Scottish poetry. But the long-continued strain of literary labour, overtaxing his strength, unfortunately, has told so severely on his health, that he has had, at least for the present, to modify, and partly abandon, his design, and been obliged to get the aid of other pens for the introductory essay on Scottish Song, and for the exhaustive indices. The work is, as has often been said, Mr Edwards' *Magnum Opus*. In it, he has done for Scotland, what Motherwell did for Renfrewshire, what Ford has done for Perthshire, and what Crockett has done for Berwickshire.

Though Mr Edwards—after having, with persevering and steady purpose, ably and nobly done more than his darg—now lays down his pen, the stream of Scottish song, like Tennyson's brook, "goes on for ever," and others will take up and continue the good work.

As Cotton Mather quaintly remarks, in the dedication to his *Decennium Luctuosum*, (an historical work relating to the Spanish invasion in 1588), Mr Edwards may also say of his truly national achievement:—"He has done as well and as much as he could, that

whatever was worthy of a mention might have it; and if this collection of matters be not complete, yet he supposes it may be more complete than any one else hath made; and now he hath done, he hath not pulled up the ladder after him; others may go on as they please with a completer composure."

No other nation, ancient or modern, could produce a work such as this. The wealth of material, to choose from, is verily an *embarres de richesses*. It is no mere list of names, with an *ipse dixit* laudation. We have succinct biographical and critical details regarding each writer, backed with specimens which enable readers to judge for themselves.

"In the general eye of Europe," says Professor John Stuart Blackie, "Scotland holds a proud place, no less by her wealth of popular song than by her thoughtful seriousness, her practical good sense, and her power of persistent work. This is a national characteristic, the growth of centuries, of which we have great reason to be thankful and to be proud; and when Scotsmen forget to cherish this thankfulness and this pride, History will not be slow to forget them."

Of the unique wealth of Scottish song, General James Grant Wilson, in the preface to his valuable work entitled "The Poets and Poetry of Scotland," ranging from Thomas the Rhymer (A.D. 1219) to the Marquis of Lorn (1876), says:—"Independently of names like those of Burns and Scott, that stand as landmarks in the world's literature, it may be truthfully asserted that no nation beneath the sun is more abundant than Scotland in local bards that sing of her streams and valleys and heathery hills, till almost every mountain and glen, every lake and brook of North Britain, has been celebrated in sweet and undying song. If it be true, as it has been said, that Scotland has given birth to two hundred thousand poets, the Editor asks for a generous and kindly consideration in his delicate and

difficult duty of selecting some two hundred and twenty names from that large number, as well as for such other shortcomings as may doubtless be discovered in a work of this nature." The fourteen or fifteen hundred poets of which Mr Edwards treats are all *modern*.

Mr Edwards is himself a true poet, although he modestly assumes the anonymous. However, when his health admits of it, we hope to welcome a volume of verse from his pen. He also possesses a marvellous command of terse Doric prose, and has accumulated material for several volumes, which, when issued, the Scottish world will not willingly let die.

The writer of an article, which appeared in the *Christian Leader* under date July 10, 1884, entitled, "Brechin and its Historian," has sketched Mr Edwards' personality in these words:—"Mr Edwards —like every man in whom there is true nobleness— is greater than his works. His struggles, which would have embittered or vulgarised an inferior man, have only enlarged his heart, and success seems to have intensified rather than spoiled his humility. His personality, to those who know him, has a rare fascination. A man more like the gentle 'Elia' we have never met. His presence is like light and heat; it requires no words to introduce him." Continuing, the writer says, "In these days, when men seem to do everything for hire, and when even a great painter confesses that he cannot look at a sunset without thinking what it would be worth on canvas, it is a rare delight to meet, in Mr Edwards, one of the few souls who love literature for its own sake." Mr J. Fullerton, thoughtful and versatile, writing under the *nom-de-plume* of "Wild Rose," also says:—"To those who know Mr Edwards best, his personality has a rare fascination. His presence is like light and heat. He has the gentleness of the loving child about him."

The criticisms on "Modern Scottish Poets," and its gifted editor, have been highly favourable. "They are a series of books," says Mr D. Walker-Brown, "which proclaim, in no uncertain sound, that the minor poets of this 'The land of song' have fallen into the hands of a writer who, in his biographical sketches and critical remarks, as well as in his selections from the writings of the bards, gives distinct evidence of the possession of keen poetic sympathies and well-balanced critical acumen, all of which is ably supported by his facile pen."

"The biographical sketches," writes Mr Stewart, Editor of the *People's Friend*, "are models of brevity. They take hold of the salient points of each author's work, supply the essential details concerning his personal history, and give a sound critical estimate of his abilities as a poet, and the place he deserves in the ranks of the grand army of Scotia's minor bards, while the practical examples given display taste and discernment." "Few men living," writes another critic, "have a more extensive knowledge of the modern poetry of Scotland, or possess in a greater degree his combination of discrimination and sympathy, for utilising this knowledge."

Mr Edwards has received many hearty congratulations for the work he has done—congratulations from far and near—wishing him success in prosecuting his task. Among these was one from the Scottish-American poet, James Law, and, with a quotation from it, we close this imperfect notice of one who has been "instrumental in raising a monument, to the poetic genius of the Scottish nation, that will be more enduring than the granite of its native rocks:"—

"Ye've done the bards a lasting good,
And wiled frae them their choicest food;
Ye've gi'en a swatch o' ilka mood
Aneath the sun;
Even Scotland may be justly prood
O' what ye've done."

LANGSIDE, GLASGOW, Dec., 1893.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

BY

JAMES M. MACBEATH, F.S.A. SCOT.

Author of "THE ORKNEYS IN EARLY CELTIC TIMES."

POETRY is a rich and many sided subject; and the definitions given of it have been as varied as its lunar-like phases. It may be described, in general terms, as the science and art by which objects and subjects, seen through the lens of the imagination, are shaped into measured lines of harmonious language, charged with the musical rise and fall of melodious words in rhythmic sequence and order.

It is that gift of inspiration by which men, possessing the original power of transfiguring the prosaic facts of life and history, are enabled to place before others the soul and spirit of them existing in their own imagination. The Language of Imagery is the original Language of man. The eye and ear are impressed with objects and sentiments existing only in the "heat oppressed brain," and "fine frenzy" of the poetic soul, as if possessing a local habitation and name—such is the illusive spell of poesy—the noblest portion of our noble literature. This faculty by which original thoughts and new combinations of ideas are produced, is otherwise called the imagination: the high places on which the soul, intensely strung, sits and sings;—now vague in the sublime epic sweep of its conceptions, anon more

humbly lyric, and lowly definite in the forms it uses. Viewed as an art of antiquity, poetry is believed to be anterior to prose. In the war cries, or it may be in the festive shouts of savage tribes, there were doubtless the dawnings both of music and song, long ere either were reduced to writing; the latter would be the first used for recording heroic deeds of tribal victories.

In early ages, the chief subject for poetry was the varied phases of natural life, and the rougher aspects of primitive passion. When ancient Alban was still pagan, there was a class of men termed Bards, subsequently named Skalds, held in great repute, the highest grade being attached to courts, who celebrated in heroic ballads the victories of chiefs—living warriors and their ancestors—whose brave exploits and renowned deeds of daring were, in this manner, commemorated, preserved, and recited when occasion demanded as incentives to future achievements and victories. Few of these Skaldic poems have survived in completeness, but numerous fragments exist. These Bards roamed at their own sweet will, in an untrammelled existence and with unrestrained steps mid the wilds of a world young and full of wonder.

The more rude and lawless a people, the more general and powerful the influences and the more violent the impulses derived from early poetry and music. In such a state of society there is naturally a close connection between these. They stood in the same relation to an early condition of social life as that held in more recent times by the pen and the press. In the absence of these, the minstrels' art was the natural medium whereby the memory became imbued with the deeds and sentiments of their forefathers.

Among a people still rude, there exists a close connection between verse and music. And this alliance is natural, for it would not only help the Reciter's

memory, but greatly increase the effect on the audience —often kindling them into a wild enthusiasm. Our ancient writers record that the men of the borders were noted for their taste in music and ballad poetry.

In these early times, and while the better class of Bards and Ecclesiastics alone were instructed in historical lore, these were naturally the chief medium by which a military nobility could obtain access to literature of any sort. Subsequently, however, learning became more general and metrical romances gave place to similar compositions in prose, when the visits of minstrels to the courts of Kings and halls of nobles and barons were generally confined to the great festivals of the year.

The predatory life led by the nobility and their followers, and the consequent vicissitudes and dangers which they experienced, frequently roused their feelings to the highest pitch, and heightened their admiration for their own rude poetry and music, as embodying the highest form of expression they knew. The tales of tradition, the song with the pipe or harp, were the main resources against the languor arising from the absence of mental excitement and bodily activity during the intervals of repose from predatory warfare or military adventure.

The morality of these bardic effusions rests on the condition of society current at the time they were composed. The bard would naturally select those themes which had absorbed his own attention and filled his soul, in common with the sept to which he belonged, and he would celebrate those virtues which he had seen exemplified in daily life and had been taught to admire. He could not be expected to rise to a higher moral level. Thus many of our earlier poetical ballads are simply records of the valour and success of predatory expeditions, irrespective of the

right or wrong involved, and celebrate the praises of chieftains for their ability as leaders.

It follows that we must not expect to find in these productions high moral precepts, refined sentiment, or elegance of expression, though ballad poetry has been found in modern times highly susceptible of all these graces. Still they contain passages in which the early minstrel melts into natural pathos, and rises into rude energy. The profession of the Bard was held in such high esteem that in pagan times it amounted to a sacred reverence for this highly privileged class. "Their skill was considered as something divine, their persons were deemed sacred, their attendance was solicited by Kings, and they were loaded with honours and rewards. In short, the ancient Bards and their art were held in that rude admiration which is ever shown by an unlettered people to such as excel them in intellectual accomplishments."*

When the inhabitants of Ancient Caledonia† were brought under the benign and softening influences of Christianity, and the knowledge of letters began to spread, this rude admiration abated gradually, and poetry was no longer a peculiar possession.

These ancient Bards, however, maintained their position for centuries as the literary leaders of the country, and exercised great influence in the moulding of men. During what are known as the Middle Ages, and while full scope was allowed them, the existing state of things so changed that they became gradually merged in, or it may be, gave place to a class called Minstrels, to whom were entrusted the task of composing the military odes or ballads, which they recited or sung as chants in the halls of Nobles, Barons, and Chiefs, to the accompaniment possibly of

* Mallet's Northern Antiquities.

† That portion of the island of Britain north of the Forth and Clyde was known to the Romans in the first century by this name.

the harp, on public occasions of greater or less social or state importance or emergency.

It may be that the ballad was the earliest form of poetry, and constituted the germ from which subsequent forms sprang: the lyric, relating domestic or personal matters in the minor key to the accompaniment of stringed instruments; the epic, dealing in the major key with grand Historical events and personages; the dramatic, for the *propriæ personæ* move and act as living conscious beings performing their several parts—these having been used for the expression of weighty thought and deep feeling both of a secular and sacred character.

The old ballad was originally constructed either on a warlike, pastoral, sentimental, or ideal basis. It was composed with rough majestic force, as recording the heroic deeds and triumphant achievements of the tribe. The more highly gifted of the Bards and Skalds who had proved themselves equal to the task of striking a bold original thought or idea in language and imagery, either of "love, war, or glamourie,"—powerful enough to excite and sustain attention, and so awaken and foster the chivalrous spirit, were patronised and courted alike by Prince, Earl, and Baron: honoured as their compeers at the festive board, and on many other occasions calling into play their chivalrous and impassioned utterances, were highly appreciated and enthusiastically applauded.

Some rehearsed their own compositions, others were mere Reciters: probably all could add a few stanzas as occasion demanded; a few scrupled not to alter the productions of others, adding or omitting whole stanzas according to personal taste or liking.

Ultimately a taste for and desire to excel in the cultivation of poetry, and probably in the use of the harp as an accompaniment, was cherished by men of letters. It may be that some of the most ancient of

our Scottish poetry was composed amid the studied leisure and refined retirement of monastic institutions. The learning which then existed was almost entirely found in these religious houses; and even in the sixteenth century, when knowledge became more widely diffused, it did not readily penetrate the recesses of these northern parts. Still, Minstrels as a privileged class, belonging to a distinct order, wearing an assumed well-known garb, and encircled with a definite character, continued to have their place freely accorded. The story of King Alfred resorting to the expedient of securing his reception at the Danish Camp in 878, by personating the garb and guise of a poor minstrel, is too well known to require rehearsal.

With the decline of the chivalrous era, and the gradual advance of civilization, arts, and letters, consequent on the invention of printing, the Minstrels' position rapidly declined, becoming, ere the close of the sixteenth century (except perhaps in Wales), a thing of the past.

The lives and work of the Bards, Skalds, and Minstrels, did not, however, pass wholly into oblivion: all left their mark. The primitive compositions of the first merged into that of the second, and reappeared, though in new phases, in the metrical romances of the third; while they in turn formed the germs of later productions, and so became the ultimate basis of many of our older heroic ballads, and eventually formed the ground work of "The Reliques of Ancient Poetry," collected and edited by Bishop Percy, and "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," collected, compiled, and edited by Sir Walter Scott; the former published in 1765, the latter in 1802.

From the spirit of wild romance shown in many of them, it has been supposed that some of the ballads forming these two celebrated collections are but

episodes which, during the inevitable changes of traditional recitation merely, became detached from the long lost romances of which they originally formed part. And it may be, says Motherwell, "That this spirit of romance was indebted to the ballads rather than the reverse." He further says :—"As society advanced in refinement, and the rudeness and simplicity of earlier ages partially disappeared, the historic ballad, like the butterfly bursting the crust of its chrysalis state, and expanding itself in winged pride under the gladdening and creative influence of warmer suns and more genial skies, became speedily transmuted into the Romance of Chivalry."

The truth, however, may lie midway; for the ballad would probably be only the first rude versified form of the Historical Romance, while the Metrical Romance might be formed on the basis of the more ancient tradition handed down from father to son, from generation to generation.

The selection and arrangement of words into poetical rhythm, or their construction into a technical rule or measure, is so intimately associated with the science of music that their connection must have been early perceived. It would be hazardous to say which was anterior, but it matters little whether the primitive poet in reciting his productions fell naturally into a chant or song, or did the early musician adapt rude lines to a rude tune? It may be that both were to some extent contemporaneous.

The early minstrel was both poet and musician, and the two ideal arts were rendered more complete when, subsequently, the harp, lute, or any other primitive instrument was the accompaniment of the living voice.

There seem to be two chief orders of poets—those who possess the creative faculty, as Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, and Burns; the other,

the reflective or the perceptive, as Horace, Chaucer, Allan Ramsay, Joanna Baillie, Wordsworth, Scott, and Tennyson.

Pastoral poetry is a branch of the latter, and embraces a numerous class. It is essentially descriptive of rural life and natural objects in their varied phases, animate and inanimate—full of truthfulness to nature. Of the former we have pictures of simple country life in almost endless variety, yet too often refined and artificial, thereby imparting an unnatural air of ease, elegance, and dignity to its objects. Of the latter we have descriptions of country villages, green fields, shaded alleys, valleys, mountains, and ravines, with the higher forms of landscape sublimity in ever varying and fanciful settings, and picturesque poetical limnings.

To one of keen, or even moderate sensibilities, there is formed a marked connection between the general tenor of the imagination, and the nature of the scenery daily presented to the senses. Keen sensibilities are blunted, and a lively imagination deadened, with little or no variety in the daily life, or a prolonged familiarity with dull and uninteresting scenery. On the other hand, frequent converse with a large and diversified landscape, interspersed with mountains, rocks, precipices, and cataracts, and other prominently marked objects of nature, stimulates the imagination.

By frequent contact with these, the powers of illustration and expression are enlarged, favouring those naturally meditative and susceptible, and who long for increased mental perfections and ideal possessions, so far as attainable by a picturesque cast of the imagination, thereby acquiring a greater mental vigour, and a consequent richer store of original conception in thought and expression.

Lovers of poetry must be interested by even a cursory glance over the field covered by our National

Muse. They will be pleased to listen to her early efforts after those tuneful sounds which were ultimately to enlist the sympathies and secure the plaudits of posterity. It is only, however, with the first of these—poetry—that this essay has to do.

Poetry and a love of song are indigenous to Scotchmen. Poesy and music have been national characteristics for centuries. Scotland possesses many hundreds of songs of such exquisite beauty as to have secured a reputation co-extensive with the civilised world. These are not only abundant, but also varied; for the native mind has for centuries found instinctive utterance in lyrical strains of a simple and natural type, o'erflowing with great tenderness and ardent passion, which no age or country has ever surpassed. There can be no question that the Scottish muse has long been recognised as possessing a quaintness, originality, grace, and tenderness peculiarly its own.

No other country or nationality can justly lay claim to such a goodly array of poets from the days of Thomas of Ercildoune, commonly called The Rhymer—the father of Scottish poetry—to those of say—John Stuart Blackie and Walter C. Smith.

It has been affirmed that during the six centuries since the revival of literature in Scotland, the country has given birth to no less than two hundred thousand poets. Whether this be an overestimate we do not presume to say; probably it is. But it may be safely affirmed that the "land of brown heath and shaggy wood" can lay claim to a greater number of poets than any other country, ancient or modern, not excepting Greece,—and our rich collection of truly popular songs are believed to be approached by few, and surpassed by none of the peoples of the world. The poetic element, then, has been a living power in "Old Caledonia" since it was both "stern and wild," gaining increased strength and vigour with age.

If we travel backward, as far as the ancient landmark erected by the life and work of Sir Thomas Lermonth, and his long past coadjutors, with their immemorial associations, we find that it is the earliest known era of our minstrel ballads. Whatever may have been antecedent has been either lost, or merged into what is now represented by the fragments that have come down to us as his, (or their) work. Doubtless he has secured a lasting place among the sons of his people.

Sir Thomas Lermonth, Thomas of Ercildoune, or Thomas the Rhymer, with other Scottish poets, whose works have unfortunately perished, were famed throughout Europe for metrical romances written in their native language, that of Chaucer,* fully a century ere "The day-starre" of English poetry was born. Sir Thomas is believed to have first seen the light in the opening quarter of the thirteenth century, and lived on to its close. He is the first conspicuous poetical figure in the early literature of his country, standing at its very gateway, presumably on its most distant horizon, like some great luminary shining 'mid the twilight of the period: or, to change the figure, like a towering and majestic mountain amid the scattering haze of Highland mist.

Doubtless he was preceded by others of his craft to whom he was probably indebted, who gleam forth dimly on the waste sea of distant and shadowy time —little more than phantoms, whose influence, however, told on their more favoured and illustrious representative. No name gathers round it a richer store of early memories, alike venerable and chivalrous. It is a landmark from which may be dated the commencement of our civilization, and our national love for literature, which has ever since

* The English language, as it then existed, was common to both Scotland and England.

grown slowly, but surely, into a stately and wide-spreading tree, bearing richly varied and abundant fruit.

The place of the Rhymer's birth is now known as Earlston, a village near the Leader, two miles above its junction with the Tweed. Ruins, called "The Rhymer's Tower," are still to be seen, notwithstanding a lapse of six centuries. In the front wall of the Church at Earlston there is a stone with the inscription:

"Auld Rhymer's race
Lies in this place."

And it is believed that this stone, with its modern spelling, took the place of a very ancient one, destroyed in 1782, which was in an older church that stood only a few yards from the present building.

By his talents and literary industry he has erected an imperishable memorial of his life and work. This, in conjunction with his social position, placed him on an equality with the highest and noblest of his day. His ballads o'erflow with all the energy and fire he could command, resembling a trumpet blast on the ear and heart of a true son of chivalry. Round his name and life work, as the old prophet-poet of Ercildoune, there centres thus, as by the heritage of centuries, a weird glamour, rich and varied, in its quaintness of rhyme and imagery, from that remote and semi-mythical age, up to the present.

Sir Walter Scott styles him "the earliest Scottish poet," and believed that his poem of "Sir Tristrem" was composed in Scotland, and was the first classical English romance, written in that Anglo Saxon-Pictish known by the name of Inglis or English. Blind Harry represents Sir Thomas as a companion-in-arms of Sir William Wallace in 1296, while he is known to have died in 1299. The poem is written in what

Robert Mannyng, a Gilbertine canon, commonly called Robert de Brunne, styles—

> "So quainte Inglis
> That many one wote not what it is,"

and in the "Prolog" to his "Annals," written about 1338, recording his admiration of "Sir Tristrem," he speaks thus :—

> "Thou may hear in Sir Tristrem
> Over Gestes* it has the 'steemt
> Over all that is, or was."

Yet in the three lines that follow he complains that, although the poem was the best he had ever read, it was written in such an ornate style, and in such difficult metre as to greatly impair its effect when recited by inferior minstrels : many of whom could scarcely repeat a single stanza without omitting some words, and often whole lines—thus marring both the sense and rhythm of the piece :—

> "If men it sayd as made Thomas ;
> But I hear it no man so say—
> But of some copple some is away, &c."

Thus a light was kindled, which has shone through the intervening centuries—burning throughout all the heroic period, continuing to our own day bright and strong as of yore. In our day the extravagances have been toned down, but there are lacking that poetic fire, energy, and vigour which characterized the olden time.

Here the poetic genius of Barbour and Wynton in the fourteenth century, Blind Harry and King James the First in the following, was kindled, for the like martial and national spirit pervade their writings. These four stand on the threshold of our early poetic literature as its venerable and venerated patriarchs, demanding more than a passing notice.

* Romances. † Esteem.

John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was born towards the close of the second decade of the fourteenth century, and lived nearly to its close—thus coming a century after the "day-starre" of Scottish poetry. His great work consists of a metrical epic recounting the heroic deeds of King Robert de Brus, which, in point of age, stands next that of "Sir Tristrem," and has long held a high place among the productions of these early times. Warton's estimate of it is—"that it exhibits a strain of versification, expression, and poetical imagery far superior to the age." Pinkerton thinks that "in elevation of sentiment it takes precedence of both Dante and Petrarch;" while in point of clearness, simplicity, beauty, and completeness, it is believed to rank before either Gower or Chaucer.

The subject being both popular and national, excited and sustained a deep and lasting interest in the breast of every patriot; recounting the heroic deeds and brave exploits of not a few of the most renowned of her sons—of a Bruce who wrested Scotland from the iron grasp of her more favoured and richer neighbour: of a Douglas, a Randolph and other of her brave sons, who nobly assisted in that glorious enterprise.

"The Bruc" exhibits an admirable genius for English poetry, and is allowed to be the first epic in the language, which, by means of a modernized version is still a great favourite with all classes. It is in octo-syllabic lines, and consists of about seven thousand rhyming couplets. It has been supposed, from passages in Wynton's Chronicle, and more recently discovered MSS at Cambridge, that Barbour was the author of other large poems, which may yet see the light.

Andrew Wynton, a canon-regular of St Andrews, subsequently prior of St Serf's Inch in Lochleven,

followed Barbour in point of time, and forms the third of our early Scottish Poets whose works have come down to us. Little is known of the place of his birth, but he is believed to have been born about 1350, and to have died in 1420, or the following year. The original title of the work which has made his name famous is "The Orygnale Cronykil of Scotland." It is an historical poem treating of the early history of the world, though mainly relating to his native land, extending down to his own time, and is written in eight-syllabled metre. Through the absence or loss of much of our ancient records, this metrical history is acknowledged to contain, as might be expected, the only authentic account of many incidents, occurrences, and transactions in Scottish story, and is acknowledged to be a work of historical importance, often, however, mixed with fabulous legends and monastic romances. It is a store-house of interesting facts and anecdotes relating to these barbarous and troublous times, when "might was right," and men's passions ran to their utmost bounds —a repository of ancient manners and customs, and a specimen of the literary attainments of our forefathers who had been favoured with the inestimable blessings of education and civilization.

Wynton's genius did not equal that of his predecessor Barbour; but his versification is considered "to be easy, his language pure, and his style animated." His educational attainments were of so high an order that his work contains numerous quotations from some of the more celebrated of the classical writers of antiquity—Livy, Cicero, Josephus, Aristotle, and others. He also makes mention of Homer, Virgil, Augustine, Dionysius, Cato, &c. The work remained in manuscript for nearly four hundred years, and the credit of presenting it before the reading world is due to David Macpherson, who, in 1795, published the

portion relating to Scotland. A new and complete edition of the entire work was issued in 1872, under the supervision of the late Dr David Laing as editor, in the well-known series of "The Historians of Scotland."

Nearly coeval with Wynton was the well-known Henry the Minstrel, or Blind Harry, whose life of Sir William Wallace has long enjoyed great popularity. Little or nothing is known authentically of the poet's life beyond that contained in the following excerpt from Major's "History of Scotland":—"The book of William Wallace was composed during my infancy, by Harry, a man blind from his birth. He wrote in popular rhymes—a species of composition in which he was no mean proficient—such stories as were then current among the common people. From these compilations I must not be blamed if I withhold an implicit belief, as the author was one who, by reciting them to the great, earned his food and raiment, of which indeed he was worthy."

Doubtless a large portion of the great popularity which the work has uninterruptedly enjoyed for upwards of three centuries is owing to the high place which the redoubtable hero of the poem has all along held in the affections of the Scottish people.

The original title of the work is "Ye Actis and Deidis of ye Illuster and Vailzeand Champioun Shyr William Wallace." The Minstrel himself tells us that his facts are mainly taken from a life (long since lost) of the champion of Scottish liberty, written in Latin by one Blair, chaplain to the hero. It seems, however, that the poet instinctively caught his materials more from the floating traditions, and moving tales among the people respecting their heroic liberator, current in his own day, fully a century and a half subsequent to that of Wallace.

Thus "The Bruc" of Barbour, and "The Wallace"

of Henry somewhat resemble each other, though the longer period of time which had elapsed between the writing of the former and the latter, the unlettered character of the author, and the comparatively humble sphere in which he moved, made it inevitable that the work should be of less historical value than that of the more favoured and learned Archdeacon of Aberdeen.

The poem is written in the ten-syllable lines which superseded those of the previous century. It is not deficient in poetical effect or wanting in elevation of sentiment, but contains many passages of great poetical merit.

Despite the homeliness of the language, and even the frequent rudeness of the versification, the work abounds in beautiful and spirited passages, such as Wallace's encounter with the ghost of Fawdon. It may be that the poet incorporated many of the detached songs, ballads, and moving tales regarding his hero, which in his day were floating on the perishable breath of tradition, founded on real or fabulous incidents; and their total disappearance as separate and independent productions may be accounted for by the great and long-continued popularity of the work.

It was paraphrased into modern Scotch by William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, and in its new garb has long been a great favourite among the peasantry, in many of whom it seems to have kindled the poetic spark. It was the study of this edition of the poem that brightened into flame the genius of Robert Burns.

The poems of Blind Harry may be regarded as the last of our early romantic or minstrel class of compositions. He seems to have been one of those rhyming chroniclers—that class of early nameless errant minstrels who, combining the offices of bard and musician, wandered from peel to peel, from fortalice to fortalice, from tower to tower, for the entertainment of

assembled barons and dames, carrying with him his harp, playing and singing those metrical romances and romantic ballads of love and war, which formed the popular poetry of that day.

There can be little doubt that the intrepidity and indomitable perseverance of the redoubtable patriot, — his life-long struggles, daring exploits, and manifold services as the asserter and restorer of Scottish independence, were lovingly commemorated in the songs of the minstrels and maidens of the country which his valour and sagacity had so signally and unexpectedly saved from ruin. Yet very little of it has been preserved, save what may have been incorporated in the works of Blind Harry.

Barbour, the father of Scottish poetry, and a contemporary of Geoffray Chaucer, says that he considers it superflous to rehearse a well-known account of a victory gained over the English at Eskdale, because

> Whasa liks, thai may her
> Young wemen, when thai will play,
> Syng it among thiam ilk day.
>
> The Bruce, Book XVI.

Had space permitted, we would have given short extracts from each of these four earlier poets of Scotland.

In giving a short description of a Minstrel of the ballad era it is necessary to digress a little. There seems to have been various grades of ancient bards. First, those attached to Royal Courts, probably scions of the nobility who had cultivated the art. These often received special marks of Royal favour, were sumptuously attired, were near the Royal person, and had special liveries and liberties bestowed on them.

A *fac-simile* of a very ancient illuminated miniature, taken from a manuscript in the British Museum, is given as a frontispiece to Bohn's Edition (1848) of Ellis's "Specimens of Early English Metrical

Romance," representing the Court of King Arthur assembled, and about to take their seats at table, where the grand carver, grand cup-bearer, and grand minstrel are distinguished by their several insignia—the last wearing a purple tunic, with mantle of blue hanging from the left shoulder, and an appropriate head dress. Doubtless the Minstrel's garb varied both in form and colour, but the higher classes of the brotherhood wore a kind of badge, denoting their rank, suspended round the neck by a silver chain.

The early bards recorded on special occasions the genealogies of their Princes and their victories in ballads carefully composed, committed to memory, and transmitted to their successors. So long as poetry continued a special profession, and the bard a regular officer at Court, it is generally allowed that they performed the functions of the historian. Subsequently, ancient ballads were much embellished by narratives of wild adventure, fictitious extravagances, and fabulous exploits calculated to captivate the more ignorant and superstitious.

All this, however, existed long before the feudal period, though largely developed and strengthened during that era, and culminated in the times of the Crusades—a period so replete with romantic adventure.

The great yearly gatherings and festive seasons were the special occasions on which the bard shone in all his splendour. Then the praises of their chiefs, and the achievements of their heroes were chanted, sung, or recited. We take one of these seasons—Christmas, its festivities and hospitalities—by way of illustration.

This was indeed a joyous time. The feudal lord, laying aside for the occasion his rank, gathered vassals and retainers into the great hall, and with his family mixed freely in the gaieties of the season. There, amid peace and plenty, the dependents assembled round a glowing fire of stems or roots of trees, the

ssail-bowl passing freely from hand to hand. This
:h scene of festivity was considered incomplete
:hout the set off of the minstrels' talents. They
ıg to the harp verses suited for the occasion,
quently accompanied with mimicry and action, and
ıctised various other means of diversion calculated
supply the want of more refined entertainment.
ch was one of the chosen times for bardism. The
›fession was a passport to all such assemblies, and
› minstrel was considered sacred when—

Placed high in hall, a welcome guest,
Courted by all, beloved, caressed,
The minstrel sang from day to day
His well premeditated lay.

ıd in his flowing robes on this and other important
:asions, his desire was to rise to the dignity of his
ice, and show himself possessed by the spirit of his
hers, thus—

His song flowed from a poet's heart,
Transfused with music to the core,
And moved in quaint and antique art,
Adorned much with Scaldic lore.
By love was fed his glowing fire—
Poetic power its kindling blast;
And wildly sweet he tuned his lyre
To all the grand heroic past.

s personal appearance gave dignity to the poetic
ital, which was accompanied by emotional expres-
ns, and emphasised by graceful attitudes and
stures freely and effectively used in rendering these
imated recitations all the more bright. His
›ressive utterances—now persuasive, anon de-
iptive, often inspirited—were emphasised by the
ıceful movements of uplifted hands, and animated
ıntenance.

His silvery voice, and noble form,
Oft touched the heart with tender grace—
For he was bending 'neath the storm
That levels low the human race.

. . . . . .

Hoary his locks, and bent his form,
Far spent in life's tempestuous storm;
Nor had he pleasure here below,
Save what his harp did then bestow:
To raise his soul on soaring wing,
He touched the all responsive string.

We are told that the mimic actors of Rome were so dramatic as almost to speak with their hands; and a play can be acted when the facial expression is allowed to count for little: how much more effective when all are in unison.

The soul's interpreters—the eyes, the lips, the entire expression of the countenance depicts the mental condition, the former kindling into flame at the bare recital of injuries, or glistening with softened moisture before the pathetic tale:—

Alternate came the smile and tear,
Now brought by Hope, anon by woe:
And yet! the prospects oft were dear,
Which made his heaving bosom glow.
Hope won the day by brighter view,
And drove his doubts and cares away—
His harp seem'd strung, and tun'd anew,
Then sweeter grew the sadden'd lay.

In the full flow of the fresh and youthful animation of a high strung nervous system, the soul of the minstrel became absorbed in a hereditary or adopted profession—all else being viewed with indifference. But with advancing and declining years, we may suppose an august calm, a tranquillity of tone and manner, a dignified repose characterised the aged minstrel, producing deep and lasting impressions on the assembly, which may be summed up in these lines:—

Anon they view'd the Minstrel smile,
While he the harp now newly strung;
His voice they heard begin the while,
Old strains that long ago were sung:—
And he these sang with tender heart,
For they old days brought back to mind;
They pierced his soul as with a dart,
And he the wound could not unbind.
For of the battle he would sing,
In which their sires did fight and fall;
Thus in their hearts was left the sting,
Of cruel deeds he did recall.

While one cannot revert to those days, when

> "Opened wide the Baron's hall
> To vassel, tenant, serf, and all"—

without sentiments of true admiration at the generosity of the host, and the romantic character of the bonds that united the assembled clan to its lord and to each other; yet few (with present and more just ideas of man's heaven-born freedom, civil and religious) can seriously desire the revival of institutions and customs, the actors in which were either class tyrants or slaves.

After these earlier poets came those of the latter part of the fifteenth, and beginning of the sixteenth century, who may be termed our Mediæval Scottish Poets, among whom may be named as worthy a distinguished place—Robert Henryson, born 1430, died 1506, author, among other poems, of the "Testament of Faire Cresceide," "The Two Mice," and "Robene and Makyne," a beautiful pastoral ballad, the earliest known example of that class of poetry in the Scottish language, and marked by great descriptive powers, with variety and sweetness of diction. Walter Kennedy, born 1450, died 1508; William Dunbar, born 1460, died 1520, our Scottish Chaucer, who was the "Rhymer," or Poet-Laureate of Scotland, and by general consent holds the highest place among the poets of this period. He was immeasurably superior to any of whom England could boast all through that dreary one hundred and ninety years between the "Canterbury Tales," and the "Faerie Queane." The poem—"The Merle and the Nightingale"—is an eminently beautiful one. The former argues human love to be best; the latter replies in behalf of love to God. He has thus the honour of leading the vanguard of British poetry in the sixteenth

century. Gavan Douglas, born 1474, died 1522, the first British scholar who translated "The XIII. Bukes of the Eneadoes of the Famose Poet Virgill into Scottish Meter, Euery Buke hauing hys perticular Prologe." It was completed about 1513, though the earliest edition dates from 1553. The prologues prefixed to the several books were original compositions by Douglas, and are considered equal in point of excellence to the works of the poet he showed such ability in translating, while they have been characterised as "yielding to no descriptive poems in any language." It has been supposed that these prologues suggested to Scott the idea of the introduction to the several cantos of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and "Marmion." The voice of contemporaries, as well as those that followed, and, subsequently, has freely accorded the palm of excellence next to Burns and Scott, in a markedly pronounced manner to him who

> . . . . In a barbarous age
> Gave rude Scotland Virgil's page.

Alexander Barclay, born 1475, died 1552; Sir David Lindsay, born 1490, died 1555, whose poems were printed in 1540, and are among the first fruits of the Scottish press; Richard Maitland, born 1496, died 1586; Florence Wilson, born 1500, died 1547; Alex. Scott, born 1502; George Buchanan, born 1506, died 1582, who enjoys the reputation of being considered the most distinguished among the Latin poets of Europe in his day—his translation of The Psalms of David has long enjoyed the highest reputation; Alexander Montgomery, born 1540, died 1614(?); Robert Ayton, born 1570, died 1638; and William Drummond of Hawthornden, born 1585, died 1649. By these "Lesser Lights" the poetic torch was transmitted burning. Drummond is reputed to have been the first Scottish poet who wrote in pure English. He lived in

the interval between Sir David Lindsay and Allan Ramsay, at a period when the style and influence of most of his predecessors were on the wane, and stood almost alone as a literary star of pure radiance, mid a darksome period of our literary history. Thus the force of his genius, shining through his own melodious notes, raised him to the high position of being considered the only literary and polished poet whose works adorn Scottish literature during the seventeenth century, and he has been long viewed as a soft Italian star twinkling through that long night of comparative darkness. His poetry is marked by great elegance and simplicity, and an easy, natural flow of versification, while his sonnets are considered his best productions, many of them being imbued with his sadder muse. They were written to commemorate the personal charms and accomplishments of the lady to whom he was betrothed, but who died on the eve of the wedding day, which event tinged deeply his whole future life. They also exhibit a love for and appreciation of the charms of natural scenery, a feature which almost wholly disappeared from English poetry during the following century. Drummond was a pure poet, one who belongs to the descriptive and reflective class, and was an admirer of the great poets of the Spenserian era. He may have been the first Scottish poet who possessed some of the works of Shakespeare, cultivating an acquaintance with what was best and purest in our literature, becoming also its devotee. Drummond is well entitled to the grateful admiration of his countrymen. Though he died two centuries and a half ago, he yet lives, through his works, in the hearts of his countrymen, who recently erected, in the old churchyard of Lasswade, a handsome mural monument to his memory on the green slopes overhanging the Esk.

All these stand in the front rank of Scottish poets of their era; behind are a great host of lesser men.

During his twenty years' captivity in England (where, though unjustly retained an exile by Henry the Fourth, he was educated with sedulous care befitting his high rank), the perusal of the works of the earliest of our Scottish Poets, nearly a century after the ever memorable battle of Bannockburn, (doubtless with Gower, Chaucer, and others), touched the sensitive mind and heart of the Royal youth James Stuart, the most illustrious of his race, and son of Robert, third King of Scotland.

It may be that Blind Harry's life of Scotland's noble patriot stirred the chafed spirit of the exiled youthful king. We know that manuscript copies of the works of these early Scottish metrical historians — so replete with glowing patriotiom — especially those of the latter, were freely and industriously circulated among the nobles and barons of those early days, and that, after the introduction of printing, some of them became household treasures.

The "Life of Wallace" was the inspiration of Burns, for he declared that its perusal "so roused his love of country," as to cause him to feel that a "tide of Scottish prejudice would continue to boil in his veins till the floodgates of life were shut in everlasting rest."

During the Royal youth's long and dreary exile, separated so cruelly from home and kindred, he happily found solace in the cultivation of his taste for music and poetry. His consciousness of the powers with which he had been endowed is seen from the manner in which he records his resolution to write his greatest work—

> "And in my tyme more ink and paper spent
> To lyte effect, I take conclusion
> Sum new thing to write."

That he did not give himself up to melancholy and despair during his long and dreary imprisonment, is

apparent from numerous passages scattered through his inimitable poem. Let one suffice—

> "Bewailling in my chamber thus allone,
> Despeired of all joye and remedye;
> For-tirit of my thoucht and wo-begone,
> And to the wyndow gan I walk in hye,
> To see the warld and folk yt went forbye,
> As for the tyme, *though I of mirthis fude,*
> *Mycht have no more, to lake it did me gude.*"

His love for minstrelsy doubtless received an impetus from his ardent love for the beautiful and accomplished Lady Jane, or Joanna Beaufort —daughter of the famous Duke of Somerset, and grand-daughter of John, Duke of Gaunt— whom he describes so tenderly in his poem, "The King's Quhair," or "The King's Book." He first saw this lady, who subsequently became his Queen, from the turret windows of his semi-prison, while walking with her maidens in the gardens of Windsor Castle.

The opening half of the fifteenth century, which was adorned by the genius of Gower and Chaucer in England, received additional lustre from that of James First, whose poetical productions are considered equal to either. The exiled Prince's poem, "The King's Quhair" (his first great work with all its original, racy, happy freshness), was written about 1415, and the period to which it belongs, taken in connection with the poets who immediately preceded him, has been characterized as "one of the most brilliant eras in our literary history, establishing Scotland's claim to a participation in these primitive honours." While some English writers are persistently cited as the fathers of our verse, the name of their great Scottish compeer is apt to be passed over in silence.

As the King's great poem marks a new and advanced era in the poetic literature of his country, we give, in the original spelling, a few of those

stanzas which record his first glimpses of her who so stirred his ardent love, and roused his poetic fire:—

Kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
Quhare as I saw walkyng under the Towre,
Full secretely, new cumyn hir to pleyne,
The fairest or the freschest young floure
That ever I sawe, methoucht, before that houre,
For quhich sodayne abate, anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert.

And though I stood abaisit then a lyte,
No wonder was, for quhy my wittis all
Were so ouercome with plesance and delyte,
Only through latting of myn eyen fall,
That sudaynly my hert become hir thrall
For ever: of free wyll, for of manace
There was no takyn in hir suete face.

And in my hede I drew ryght hastily,
And eft sones I lent it forth ageyne,
And saw hir walk that verray womanly,
With no wight mo, bot only women tueyne.
Than gan I study in myself and seyne,
Ah swete! are ye a warldly creature,
Or hevingly thing in likenesse of nature?

Or are ye god Cupidis owin princesse,
And cumyn are to louse me out of band?
Or are ye verray Nature the goddesse,
That have depayntit with your hevinly hand,
This gardyn full of flouris, as they stand?
Quhat sall I think, allace! quhat reverence
Sall I mester to your excellence?

Giff ye a goddesse be, and that ye like
To do me payne, I may it nat astert;
Giff ye be warldly wight, that dooth me sike,
Quhy lest God mak you so my derest hert,
To do a sely prisoner thus smert,
That lufis you all, and wote of noucht but wo,
And, therefore, merci suete! sen it is so.

Quhen I a lytill thrawe had maid my mone,
Bewailing myn infortune and my chance,
Unk nawin how or quhat was best to done,
So ferre I fallying into lufis dance,
That sodeynly my wit, my countenance,
My hert, my will, my nature, and my mynd,
Was changit clene rycht in ane other kind.

No poet ever gave himself more honestly to depict the whole-heartedness of his devotion to the object of his affection. The entire poem is both a true sacrifice of worship and a garland of praise. Its heart is truth, and its garments are music. It is luxuriant with the rich grass and flowers of language,

and graphic speech of the 15th century, although these greet the eye in antique phrase. There is in the poem—greatness, culture, balance, scope, and originality of thought and expression. Song is the speech of feeling, and the royal poet so used it. While he moved in the shining orbit of rank, his soul was embued with the music of poetry, in which he proved himself a master. The choicest things in literature—of which this is one—are such as awaken a response in the common heart.

In his great poem, James is simple, easy, and true to his own nature—hence its sweetness and power. His thoughts and words flow like a full, peaceful stream, diffuse with plenteousness unrestrained. They are musical, graceful, and lyrical. They, doubtless, increased his love for, and devotion to the object of his affections, for this is the secret of genuine lyric stanzas. Verily, "The King's Quhair" contains the best poetry which appeared between that of Chaucer and the Elizabethan era.

James the First is believed to have led the van in the poetic movement which culminated in Dunbar, and died away in Sir David Lindsay, just before the noise and tumult raised by the trumpet blast of the Reformation. He is, in every respect, worthy of being enrolled in "that little constellation of remote, but never-failing luminaries who shine in the highest firmament of literature, and who, like morning stars, sang together at the bright dawning of British poesy."

Ellis pronounces "The King's Quhair" to be "full of simplicity, and not inferior in poetical merit to any similar production of Chaucer." He considers the introduction to the poem to be "remarkably spirited and beautiful," and the general structure of the poem itself to be "equal in fancy, elegance of diction, and tender delicacy of feeling to any similar work of the

same period produced in England, or in its author's native Kingdom."

As an amatory poem Washington Irving says—"It is edifying in these days of coarser thinking to notice the refinement and exquisite delicacy which pervade it, banishing every gross thought, or immodest expression, and presenting female loveliness, clothed in all its chivalrous attributes of almost supernatural purity and grace."

In attempting to trace the source of the exquisite refinement of the poetry of James the First, it may be mentioned (he was in the eleventh year of his age ere he left his father's court) that there is evidence that among the Scottish nobility, even in that early age, there were families of a superior type, some of whose younger branches were accustomed to Continental travel, and were at particular periods, because of their education, ability and refinement, welcomed in the best society in Europe.

Henry the Fourth restored the young monarch to his throne, and two historians of that period, Fordon, and Boece, besides others, record the estimation in which he was held by his subjects after his restoration, and the great influence which he subsequently wielded over them in many directions—likewise fostering their poetical and musical tastes. It is believed that his genius shewed itself most masterful in music; for tradition has it that in the use of the harp he excelled and surpassed all compeers. Boece the historian speaks thus of him:—"He was crafty in playing baith of lute and harp, and sindry other instruments of music: he was expert in gramer, oratary, and poetry, and maid sae flowan and sententious versis;—he was ane natural and borne poete."

By general consent King James is viewed as the acknowledged father of Scottish melody; and popular

tradition—it may be called belief—claims for him the parentage of many of our most beautiful airs. Thus his influence over the musical and poetical element of his native country was both strong and lasting.

Many of his minor pieces have been lost, still we have "Christis Kirk on the Grene," and "The Peblis to the Play,"* both being descriptive of the rural manners and past times of that age. In the latter piece there are two songs mentioned as being then in popular use:—"There fure ane man to the holt"—*i.e.*, There went a man to the wood; and "Their sall be Mirth at our Meeting," both being unfortunately lost. The first is referred to in the sixth stanza of the "Peblis to the Play,"† where the Royal Poet exhibits genuine originality: unfolding that rich store of humorous, playful, and graphic delineations of every day life which subsequent song-writers, with Burns at their head, imitated, enlarged, and perfected: which have ever since been the peculiar marks of the genius of Scottish poetry.

These seem the earliest songs of which we have any notice, save fragments dated about 1286, 1296, and 1314. None of these, however, can be viewed as lyric songs in the modern use of that term. The well-known ballad—"The Battle of Harlaw"—has been attributed to the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is considered the most lengthy ancient Scottish historical ballad extant. The event on which it is founded occurred in 1411, and it seems likely that the poem was committed to writing soon after.

A further mention of song occurs in Gavan

* This poem has been attributed to James V., but the testimony of Major (almost a contemporary of the first James) in ascribing it to James I. is considered both by Bishop Percy and Ritson as conclusive.

† Our desire to keep this essay within as narrow limits as possible forbids us quoting these stanzas.

Douglas' prologues to his translation of Virgil, written about 1512, which contains references to four separate songs, viz. :—"I come hither to woo," "The Ship sails ower the sault faem," "I will be blithe and licht," and "The joly day now dawis," all of which seem lost, save the merest fragment of the latter.

In the ludicrous poem, entitled "The Tale of Colkebbie Sow"—written not long after the era of James the First, which appears in "Laing's Remains of Scottish Poetry"—are found the names of a number of songs and tunes then popular, such as "Trolly Lolly," "Cok craw thou qll day," "Twysbank," "Terway," "The Bass," "Be yon wodsyd," "Joly Lammane," "Lait, lait in evinnynis," "Joly Martene with a mok," "Rusty Bully with a bek," "Tras and Trenass," &c. The verses of all these are believed to be lost, and if the tunes exist it is, with one or two exceptions, under other names. The Tale itself bears internal evidence of having been written during the era of Minstrelsy.

Subsequent events, extending over a considerable period, tended to the development of these kindred arts among the nobles and people. Intimate relations with France had their own effect in this direction, while the career of James the Fifth—himself a composer and song-writer, and the musical accomplishments of his unfortunate daughter, Mary Stuart—tended to foster the growing national love for both. That the accomplished, but unstable Queen, inherited her passion for these sister arts is freely acknowledged; and it seems generally conceded that her two secretaries—Chatelar and Rizzio—were admitted to favour largely for their musical skill and accomplishments.

Thus did the Court encourage among the nobility a love for music, which, by slow degrees, permeated all classes of society. Chatelar is credited with having added a few pathetic melodies to the national stock, which have long been considered indigenous;

while to Rizzio the country may be indebted for some of its finer and more popular pieces.

Be this as it may, these kindred arts so flourished, in rude and elementary forms, at the period referred to as to rouse into action the musical and poetical ardour of the more educated portion of the nation.

To expatiate upon the characteristics of early ballad poetry would be a digression from the main line of this essay, still, as more than even a passing reference to these seems essential to its completeness, a short description may be allowed.

Ballad poetry grew up in the stormy feudal times, in out-of-the-way localities and in obscure nooks and corners—so rude in structure and expression as to be quite uncontrolled by critical rules, yet full of energy and vitality. It naturally divides itself into two parts—historical and romantic. The former exhibits the unsettled state of the country through its wars with the sister kingdom, the many and long regencies, and the consequent general lawlessness which prevailed; the latter displays the numerous domestic phases and constitutional temperaments of a people seemingly ready to adopt whatever was romantic and enthusiastic in manners and sentiment.

Clanship had its origin in self-protection and self-aggrandizement. The sept was so closely bound together that an injury done to its weakest member was viewed as an offence against the clan, and nothing short of the blood of the offender, and that of his entire kindred, was considered sufficient atonement. Thus the dark side of clanship was exhibited in originating and multiplying sources of jealousy, in fostering and maintaining the antipathies of rival families, and in those long-continued and embittered tribal feuds with all their inevitable results. On the eve of a Clan Raid, the bard's recitals roused the tribe to action and vengeance,

and in centuries following the piper played the pibroch or battle-spey of the sept for the same object.

A more recent illustration of this trait in the Celtic character was afforded at the battle of Waterloo, during the hours when its fortunes may have said to hang in the balance. It is given in Book Third of "Johnston's History of the Scottish Regiments"—Cameron Highlanders, 79th Regiment. Sometime after the gallant Picton was killed, and General Kempt had been severely wounded, Milhand's Cuirassiers advanced upon Kempt's Brigade, in the pride of success after their destruction of a battalion of Hanoverians, whereupon "the 79th and other regiments at once threw themselves into square, and whilst the Camerons were forming Piper Kinneth Mackay stepped outside the bayonets, and played round the square the air, 'Cogaidh nà Sith' (War or Peace)."

Direful were the evils springing from numerous marauding expeditions and night forays. The powerful lord, who, safe in numerous retainers and moated keep, bade defiance to law, meeted out his vengeance in the sacking of castles during the hours of rest, and the wholesale slaughter of the slumbering inmates; the burning of border keeps, with their mailed knights, the ladies at their bower windows, and household retainers; successful forays into the enemies' country, with the horrible accompaniments of fire and sword; the ravaging and depopulation of large districts of country, carrying off hundreds of prisoners; the lifting of droves of cattle and all moveables of value—these heart-rending scenes being depicted in the ballad poetry of the time with tragic realism and considerable truthfulness.

It was over such a state of things, 'mid such scenes, principally where factious Chiefs and Barons

held sway, and in whose bosoms glowed the fiercest hatred, that the ballad casts its glamour. Amid these northern semi-savage tribes bardism found its chosen home. There the minstrels of the "North Countrie" held undisputed sway, and received pre-eminence over their less favoured brethren.

Early ballad poetry is deeply imbued with all this. The prevailing features are harsh and ferocious, often narrating harrowing cruelties perpetrated in cold blood, Yet now and again gracious tenderness and generous treatment are displayed — traits of character exhibiting true sympathy with suffering humanity, lying trodden under foot, like a tender beauteous way-side flower; or, to change the figure, the conqueror becoming the helper of the helpless, the protector of the unprotected, the succourer of the needy.

It is a relief to know that, in some of the ballads, there are silver linings to the clouds, as in the fine heroic songs of "Chevy Chase" and "Auld Maitland," where there are not only genuine strokes of nature and artless passion, but deeds of rude, yet high-minded gallantry.

The tone and spirit of chivalry, derived from love, devotion, and valour, had its own share in moulding the manners and customs of that early period. The chivalrous, gentle, tender regard for women on the one part, and the delicacy of feeling which, even in so rude an age, seems to have characterised the Scottish wife and maiden on the other, were doubtless fostered by predisposing circumstances.

The love for offspring, too, is touchingly exemplified in the ballads, and numerous are the instances of parental and filial affection.

Superstition is also a leading element in early poetry, and this may be traced to a variety of causes. What ignorance and superstition are believed to have

seen is soon beheld anew, and, by oft-repeated testimony, marvellous incidents are placed beyond the region of doubt. These, with other visions and prognostics, float about and people the air; thus, through the well known channels of rustic tradition, each mountain, glen, and solitary heath came to possess its own unearthly visitors—each sept and family its omen, or boding spectre. Superstition, thus reduced to a system, fell into the hands of a class, and by them, as gifted seers, and wizards, and minstrels, systematized and expounded, exhibited these and other characteristics in the early ballads.

But to return. Before the invention of printing, and even for some time afterwards, the regular preservation of our old ballads could scarcely have been expected.

As many of the Minstrels could neither read nor write, there would be comparatively few manuscript copies of those early songs. Thus would the Bards have to trust to well-stored, and well-exercised memories, for the entertainment and amusement of lovers of poetry in grange and hall.

Doubtless successive garlands of song appeared, bloomed, faded and were forgotten to such an extent that even the names of but few of them have been preserved. It is matter of the deepest and most sincere regret that a large portion of the ancient music and poetry of Scotland was irretrievably lost centuries ago.

About the middle of the sixteenth century there was printed at St Andrews a curious work, entitled "Vedderburn's Complainte of Scotland," wherein is preserved the names of thirty-seven of the more ancient songs of Old Caledonia, many of which, considerably upwards of three centuries ago, must have been the delight, solace, and admiration of our ancestors.

Though pressed for space, we are tempted to give the names of these, from the melancholy interest attaching to treasures partly lost—choice samples of the lost poetry of the time—"The Percy and the Montgumrye," "The Hunts of Cheviot," and "The Battle of Harlaw," being three historical ballads; "Grieved is my sorrow," "O lusty May vith Flora quene," "Cull ta me the rushes green," and "Still under the leaves green," these have been preserved. But the remainder are lost, viz., "My hart is leinit on the land," "In ane mirthful morou," "Allace that samyn sweit face," "My luf is layd upone ane knycht," "Fair luf lend thou me thy mantil joy," "My lufe is lyand seik, send him joy, send him joy," "Turne the sweit Ville to me," "Greuit is my sorrow," "Sal I go vitht you to Rumbelo fayr," "The Huntis of Cehuet," "The Battel of the Hayrlaw," "O myne harte hay this is my sang," "Maestress fayr ze vil forfoyr," "Al musing of meruellis a mys hef I gone," "God sen the Duke had bidden in France, and Delabaute had nevyr cum hame," "Rycht soirly musing in my mynd," "The sang of Gilquiskar," "The frog cam to the myl dur," "Bill vill thou cum by a lute and belt thee in Sanct Francis cord," "Trolle lolee lemendon," "Allone I veip in grit distress," "Brume, brume on hil," "The Aberdenis nou," "Skald a bellis nou," "Faytht is there none," "King Vilzamis note," "Lady help zour prisoneir," "Gode zou gude day vil boy," "Allace I vyit zour tua fayrene," "Cou thou me the raschis grene," "Still vnder the leyuis grene," "The breir byndes me soir," "Pastance vitht gude companye," "The lang noune now," and "The Cheapel Valk."

Further service was rendered by Andro Hart, printer in Edinburgh, about the beginning of the seventeenth century, by the publication of a work

entitled "Ane Compendious Book of Goodly and Spiritual Songs, collectit out of sundrie parts of Scripture, with sundrie other Ballats, chainged out of Profaine Songs, for the avoiding of Sinne and Harlotrie"—printed in 1590 and 1621, wherein is fortunately preserved some of our more ancient Scottish melodies. It is, however, believed that Hart's volume contains a goodly number of parodies on the songs in the earlier volume, issued at St Andrews.

In October, 1568, George Bannatyne, a young man "of the middle class, left Edinburgh at the time when the pest broke out there, when hundreds were dying in that city," and retired to the old manor of Newtyle, near the village of Meigle, in Strathmore, his father's country house. There he devoted himself for three months to transcribing in one large volume, from the mutilated and obscured manuscripts he succeeded in procuring, the fugitive productions of the Scottish muse, during which time he transcribed three hundred and seventy-two poems, in no less than eight hundred folio pages. The Scottish people, natural lovers of literature, cannot be too grateful to the memory of Bannatyne for his abundant labour of love, in thus rescuing from oblivion much of our early poetry, which, but for his prompt and disinterested action, would have been long ago lost to posterity. This volume has, fortunately, been carefully preserved, and long ago found a sure resting-place in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, where it has been long known and treasured as the "Bannatyne Manuscript." It was published in extenso a few years ago by a Glasgow society. Having a taste for poetry, Bannatyne made himself conversant, in their manuscript form, with the works of such poets as Dunbar, Douglas, Henryson, Montgomery, Alex.

Scott, and other contemporaries. At that early date it was not customary to print literary productions, save for some reason beyond their intrinsic merits. The preservation of these early poems was thus placed in extreme peril, and many of them would in all probability have been lost, but for the zeal of Bannatyne.

The late widely-known and highly-esteemed David Laing, LL.D., Edinburgh, did good service in more recent years by collecting, collating, and editing a handsome volume which contains the "Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland," published in parts during 1821-22, and re-issued by Blackwood in 1885. It contains twenty-seven separate poems—on social life, love, war, folk-lore, and fairy-land. Thus we still possess a portion of the minstrel ballads and popular poetry of an early date, apart from Percy's Relics of Ancient Poetry, and Scott's Border Minstrelsy, though it cannot be said to be so vigorous as to rise to the dignity of a popular epos; still they are genuine utterances of natural Scottish feelings, hopes, and aspirations, of which none need be ashamed.

The earliest volume of what may be properly termed Song, published in Scotland, was printed at Aberdeen in 1662, by John Forbes. It consists of a collection of music, bearing the title "Cantos, Songs, and Fancies in several Musical Parts, both apt for voices and viols." A goodly number of the songs, however, are taken from the "Compendious Book of Goodly and Spiritual Songs," referred to on a former page; others are quoted from the older Scottish poets of the preceding century, while the music is chiefly English, and apparently adapted for Church service, &c. Thus the work cannot be said to contain even one true Scottish song or melody. Forbes'

work was recently reprinted by Mr Gardner, Paisley, in his "New Club Series."

Fully half-a-century more elapsed ere the National muse became generally popular. It is feared much of the native poetry of this period has also been lost, though portions have survived the general wreckage, among which may be named that of Alexander Montgomery, author of "The Cheerie and the Slae," whose works have often been reprinted in more recent times.

Scottish music and poetry were only partially known to the world until the more modern stars appeared on the literary horizon, in the persons of Allan Ramsay, Blair, Beattie, Joanna Baillie, Thompson, Falconer, Grahame, Campbell, Macneill, Burns, Hogg, Cunningham, Scott, Tannahill, and, lastly, in that of Wilson, Moir, Pollok, Aird, Mackay, Robert Buchanan, W. C. Smith, and a host of others—all of whom drank at the perennial fountain opened by their predecessors, and thus swelled the noble brotherhood of Scottish singers, whose productions prove them worthy successors of the earlier bards and songsters of Scotland.

Thus do poets and singers at once inspire and satisfy the capacity which takes pleasure in their ideal creations. For it seems generally conceded that their cultivation has for its object the idealising of the real, and the realising of the ideal—these yielding satisfaction and pleasure of a higher order than are found in material things. Their tendency is towards increased refinement, and to a truer realisation of the great, the good, and the noble with which man in his best estate was endowed. Thus do they make nobler in us only what is already noble—that which is higher than those senses through which they pass—our surroundings being proportionally inferior to our ideals.

In Scotland, in those early days, the science of literature was in its infancy. So late as 1706, there was published at Edinburgh, by James Watson, the first portion of a collection of ancient poetry, entitled "'Comic and Serious Scots Poems." A second followed three years later, and a third, published in in 1710, completed the work. About this period, Scottish music was introduced to, and became very popular with the upper classes of society in the sister kingdom; and Scotch airs were sung at all the chief places of public amusement in London, and other English cities.

That a highly intellectual, sensitive, and poetic people may be prostrated by a continued course of tyranny and persecution is strikingly exemplified by the literary history of Scotland under the reigns of Charles the First and Charles the Second. During that period nothing of permanent value in poetic literature can be named from the days of Drummond of Hawthornden to the rise of James Thomson; while in the sister country the reverse holds good.

Poesy had somewhat waned, through the growing obsoleteness of the elder poets, by the time its restorer appeared in the person of the Scottish Theocritus—Allan Ramsay, the acknowledged leader of modern Scottish poets, who, until the days of Burns, was the most distinguished name in the long list the lyrical muse of the country has produced.

Allan was born towards the end of 1686 in the village of Leadhills, an obscure hamlet on the banks of Glengoner, in Lanarkshire, and had the misfortune to lose his father while yet an infant. Soon after, his mother married a small land-holder in the same county. The boy was sent to the village school, where he was allowed to remain until he could read Horace "faintly in the original." At his mother's death, in 1700, when the lad was but

fifteen, the step-father resolved to place him somewhat on his own resources. With this in view, he brought Allan to Edinburgh, where he was apprenticed to a wig-maker, and continued at the trade several years after the term agreed on had expired.

The earliest of his poetical productions now traceable is one addressed, in 1712, "To the Most Happy Members of the Easy Club," of which he was appointed poet-laureate three years later. The genius, and felicitous expression exhibited by King James the First in his poem "Christ's Kirk on the Green," seems to have early touched the sympathetic chords of Allan's poetic temperament, for, in 1716, he published an edition of that poem, with a second canto by himself, to which he added a third two years later.

Near the North Bridge, on the way to "John Knox's house," on the left, stand the remains of the house long occupied by Ramsay, its two upper storeys having been removed about forty years ago. Here, "at the sign of the Mercury," he lived and laboured as author, printer, editor, and publisher—frequently issuing his poems singly, in sheets or half-sheets. In these forms they enjoyed much favour, and had a ready sale at the price of one penny each—the worthy citizens sending their children for "Allan Ramsay's last piece." He continued to reside there till 1725.

In 1724 appeared the first volume of "The Tea-Table Miscellany," a collection of choice songs and melodies of his country. The second and third appeared in 1727, after he had removed his business to the Luckenbooths* (long since demolished), the fourth and last being published subsequent to 1733.

* Booths or shops formed by enclosing the open arcaded spaces where business was transacted, leaving only windows and doors such as are now in use.

In the preface to this work, Ramsay states that a number of the songs were partly written by himself, and partly "done by some ingenious young gentlemen who were so pleased by his undertaking that they generously lent him their assistance." Of these, four can be distinctly named—Robert Crawford, William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, William Hamilton of Bangour, and David Mallet. The first was a cadet of the family of Drumsoy, and wrote several songs popular in their day; the second was Ramsay's senior as a poet, whose effusions roused the ambition of his more favoured brother; the third came of an ancient family in Ayrshire, who received a classical education, early developing a taste for poetry, in which he ultimately excelled. The fourth and last was a native of Perthshire, studied at the University of Edinburgh, attached himself to literature, developed a taste for poetry, and became a friend of Ramsay, to whom he addressed an epistle on Mallet's departure to London, where he enjoyed the friendship of his distinguished countryman, James Thomson, author of "The Seasons."

The "Tea-Table Miscellany" became very popular, and passed through no less than twelve editions within a few years. This was followed by two volumes in the same field, entitled "The Ever-Green: being a Collection of Scots Poems, wrote by the Ingenious before 1600." In these six volumes Ramsay did much more than simply preserve many of the older songs and ballads; he improved both by numerous masterly touches of his own; he enriched Scottish literature by original compositions of great beauty and pathos, abounding with characteristic tenderness, and no less characteristic humour. His greatest work is "The Gentle Shepherd," a pastoral drama of the loves and lives of the Scottish peasantry in the early portion of

the last century. The "Gentle Shepherd" is acknowledged to be the best of his poems, and able critics have not hesitated to pronounce it the finest pastoral drama in the English language. It is characterised by an air of primitive simplicity, and child-like tenderness and beauty of expression, and is inimitable as the best lengthy example we have of every-day folk-speech, and is a most expressive example of our classic doric. Its landscapes are peopled with beings who, in their naturalness, carry us along with them in their several positions, situations, and circumstances. Whether we consider the elegant simplicity of the style, the ease and unaffected humour of the dialogue, the lovely scenes which it delineates, the enchanting pastoral poetry which it contains, or the pure morality it inculcates, it hardly has a fellow. Thus he not only produced an inimitable pastoral, interspersed with tender and beautiful lyrics, but he adapted these to the old tunes, familiar and well-known by all classes. On its first appearance, in 1725, it was hailed with great enthusiasm, and, passing rapidly through various editions, was welcomed by lovers of poetry and song, from the Peer to the cottager. Ramsay instinctively felt it was essential that his thoughts and feelings should receive rhythmic utterance, and in such a manner as to be incapable of being written more fully and precisely in any other way. That this gift was largely possessed by him is clear from a careful perusal of his poems, which were the harbinger of that brighter day issuing in the meridian splendour of Burns, Scott, and other favoured sons of song.

Ramsay's genius in interpreting the charming and harmonious voices of nature and humanity is excelled only by his great successor, Robert Burns, who was so enamoured with "The Gentle Shepherd" that he pronounced it "the most glorious poem ever written."

Campbell, too, made it his companion, and wrote—"the verses of this inimitable pastoral had passed into proverbs, and is still the delight and solace of the peasantry whom it describes, and is engraven on the memory of his native country." Wilson, of Christopher North celebrity, wrote—"though Theocritus was a pleasant pastoral, and Sicilia sees him among the stars, yet all these dear idyls together are not equal in worth to the single "Gentle Shepherd."

By general, nay, universal consent, its merits are of a high order, and will carry its author's name honourably through the centuries that follow. Poetry addressed to all, and fully and freely enjoyed and appreciated, must be animated by the spirit that breathes around.

It must, however, be noted, that Ramsay did not scruple to alter and remould many of the older pieces, without giving the originals side by side, and took no pains to apprise his readers of the extent to which he carried these alterations and emendations. But while this is so, it must not be forgotten that his own contributions to the stock of Scottish song paved the way for subsequent achievements in the art. In the "Tea-Table Miscellany" he laid the foundation, on a firm basis, of all future collections of Scottish song, and so roused the national spirit as to impart a fresh impetus in that direction. It is agreed on all hands that our National Lyre was permanetly enriched by his genius. At this period in the history of the Scottish Lyra, few, if any, had shewn such mastery over rhyme, or greater command of the melody of verse than Ramsay.

This cursory sketch of some of the leading Scottish Poets and their productions demands a passing reference to the poetic and musical creations

of the Jacobites during the first half of the eighteenth century. Both leaders and people in that unfortunate movement aimed at nothing less than the repeal of the Union, and the restoration of the Stuart dynasty. The zeal and enthusiasm awakened on behalf of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" flowered into those inimitable songs and airs, which, as pictographs of the social and political condition of the period, are allowed to be unsurpassed in the song literature of this or any other country. They are admitted to be the most pathetic and chivalrous expression—a wealth of felicitous utterance—of self-sacrificing devotion and loyalty to a Royal Cause to be found in the literature of nations.

Party songs—composed with the avowed object of aiding the Stuart cause, and instinct with thrilling ardent fealty—they are remarkable illustrations of what poetry and music can do with a people capable of heroic self-abandonment. In matter and in form, these Jacobite songs stand alone in the literature of the country, as compositions having no affinity with our more ancient ballads of daring romantic adventure, or with the softer strains of our pastoral and lyric poetry. They are marked by a strength of character which cannot brook opposition—a humour, rude, rough, and wild, wedded to a tenderness irresistible, lying "too deep for tears"—a certain recklessness of thought, and fearlessness of expression—bold to face all opposition; revealing a dauntless race, resolutely determined to do or die in the struggle to secure the restoration of the Stuart dynasty to the throne of their ancestors; hurling their fiercest anathemas against all who opposed their darling project.

The marvellous enthusiasm which characterised the people and their leaders in both rebellions on behalf of the Stuart race smote with its contagion

all classes, and inspired those songs with their singularly originality of thought and force and fervour of style. It should be borne in mind that both authors and ballads are the lineal representatives of the early skalds, and subsequent minstrels and their poetry.

It may be noted that there was a marked absence of song from the reigning Royalist party during that period—a barren contrast to the Cavalier genius. A strong romantic affection attached itself to the exiled royal race, and to those who lost home, and lands, and all things dear for their devotion to their ancient royal house. The deep injustice and bitter persecution meted out to the sufferers in the unequal struggle were such as to arouse the national feeling in their behalf—their bards partaking in the common sympathy. Hence many of these songs are inimitable in their tenderness and pathos.

It is believed that, owing to their non-publication in a collected form until the second decade of the present century, many Jacobite songs have been lost. A few were given to the public in their original spirit and simplicity, with their melodies, by Ritson; while Cormak subsequently added a goodly number to the list. But it was reserved for the Ettrick Shepherd, so late as the second decade of the present century, to gather the scattered fragments of that earlier fertile era, which had hitherto been floating on the breath of tradition, or mouldering to decay in the archives of Highland families who had suffered in that cause.

The result of Hogg's labours was embodied in two volumes, published by Blackwood in 1819-1820, entitled "The Jacobite Relics of Scotland, being the Songs, Airs, and Legends of the Adherents to the House of Stuart." These volumes contain a great

variety of songs and airs, both Scottish and Highland —a goodly number being previously unknown to the many enthusiastic admirers of the minstrelsy of Scotland. Ballads and songs, differing greatly in character, and hailing from localities widely separated, are here found side by side. They were gathered from many sources, and selected from a wealth of material as those most worthy of being made known to the many, as they had hitherto been to the few Several of these, chiefly Highland, and previously unknown, are believed to be additions to the common stock, and are there printed for the first time. It will be observed that, in some instances, songs in the lowland Scottish dialect are set to what appears to be old Highland melodies. If this be objected to, it should be remembered that Burns set the example.

The volumes contain upwards of two hundred songs, with their melodies, besides a considerable number additional in the appendices to both, among which will be found that not a few fresh favourites are added to the already rich treasure-house of Scotland's song. Among these may be named—"Here's to the King, Sir," "Johnnie Cope," "Carle, and the King come," "The Blackbird," "Lewis Gordon," "Adieu for ever more," "Charlie is my darling," "The wee, wee German Lairdie," "Prince Charles and Flora Macdonald's Welcome to Skye," "The Auld Stuart's back again," "Oh he's been lang o' comin'," "Bonnie Laddie, Highland Laddie," "The Chevalier's Lament," "Cam Ye by Athole Braes," "Here's a Health," "Flora and Charlie," "O'er the water to Charlie," "There'll never be Peace," "A wee bird cam to oor ha' door," "The Tears of Scotland," and "We'll never see peace sin' Charlie's Awa."

Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry" first appeared in 1765, in three volumes, and soon won for itself considerable popularity. It is believed to have been

one of the chief agencies in reviving a love for early metrical romance poetry. In them the traditionary minstrelsy, ancient ballads, and historical songs were collected, restored, remodelled, and preserved for posterity. It was a poetry which, to its own generation, had ministered to an important public use, by softening, and perhaps chastening the rudeness of a martial and unlettered people. It was now to serve a widely different purpose—to help in restoring nature where it had been partially displaced by artifice, to give life again to what had seemingly grown cold, and to invigorate a poetry which had become sickly from excessive refinement.

But the poetry which Bishop Percy brought to the acquaintance of scholars had a life elsewhere, and of yore. It was composed of winged words, which had taken their flight from one generation to another, like swallows in their courses, alighting here and there in the sunshine and warmth. It was like the seeds of flowers carried hither and thither, to take root in genial earth, and flower in many soils. Its home was not so much in books, as in floating traditions preserved alike in cot and hall. It was a music in the air, for it might be heard by the farmer at the plough, the sower in the field, the reaper in harvest, the shepherd on the hillside, the milkmaid by her pail, the mother by her cradle and at her daily household labours, the matron at her spinning wheel, the weaver plying his shuttle, and lovers in their wooing:—all were familiar with its strains. It was a poetry dwelling "chiefly in the North," having little or no affinity with Southern refinement.

In 1802 appeared "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," by "The Great Wizard," in two volumes, followed in 1803 by a second enlarged edition in three volumes. This work was the means of introducing its author to the reading world. Indeed, it

placed him in the front rank of the poets of the nineteenth century. It was the beginning of a career of prolific and successful authorship, unequalled in the annals of literature. Motherwell's collection appeared in 1827, while others followed; but space forbids further and more minute details of more recent publications of ballad poetry.

Dr Robert Chambers says—"While the Scottish people are more proud of their songs and music than of any other branch of their literature, they can tell very little regarding the origin and early history of those endeared national treasures."

It is acknowledged that, until a comparatively recent date, very little was known regarding the antiquity, history, and biography of the great bulk of our oldest songs and ballads. All that could generally be known about the most of them was that they were certainly old, if not belonging to a remote antiquity. It was not until near the close of the last century that an effort was made to ascertain the age, authorship, and occasion of many of our Scottish songs. This praiseworthy attempt was the work of Joseph Ritson, whose example was followed by others. But these labours, and their results, were limited in range, costly in price, and beyond the reach of the masses. Still, those early efforts paved the way for subsequent and more successful explorers

In 1843 the publication of "Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature" did much in this direction; while the felt want was more fully met by the publication, in 1844, of Whitelaw's "Comprehensive Collection of the most approved Songs of Scotland" —a second enlarged edition being issued in 1866.

The writer fears some readers may consider he has entered at too great length into the early history of

Scottish Poets, Poetry, and Song, with their many and varied environments, somewhat after the style of a poetical antiquary. This has been done, however, in the hope of imparting fresh interest to our early muse, by enabling readers who desire to trace in some faint degree the sources from which these have sprung, and the channels through which they have reached us—thus giving a panoramic view as extensive as the limits of this essay will admit.

While many of our Scottish Poets have left enduring monuments that permanently enrich mankind, two —Burns and Scott—by their exceptional originality, and power of rhythmic utterance, have so gained the national favour as to stand out prominently in its literature as stars of the first magnitude.

Burns was born on 25th January, 1759, in a lowly cottage near the town of Ayr.* His father, though a

* It may be that Burns' ancestors (the old spelling being Burness), came from Orkney, there being two localities of that name there, viz., Burness, a parish in the island of Sanday, and an ancient township or district in the parish of Firth, on the mainland.

The subject forms the groundwork of an interesting article in the *Scots Magazine* for January of this year. An old letter is given in full from Montrose (date obliterated) written by a Dr James Burness, of the Bombay Army, to Mr William Burness, Stonehaven, on the subject of the genealogy of the family, concerning which they were in correspondence. The Dr writes—"It is not improbable that your information is the same as that contained in the letter from Mr John Burness (presumably the father of William) to my father, Provost Burness of Montrose. If so, I have strong reason to believe that the origin of the name there given is incorrect, as a law document is still in existence granting a respite to Johnne Burness, and others, for th—[piece mice-eaten] of the Earl of Caithness, and dated S[tirlin]g, September 1528, in the reign of King James the 5th, no less than 165 years before the revolution referred to by Mr John Burness. The Johnne Burness alluded to in the respite was in all proba-

man of superior understanding, and high moral and religious principle, was somewhat austere, while his mother was much more cheerful, and possessed an inexhaustible store of old ballads and songs. When singing some of these she often caused tears to trickle down an old man's cheeks, while with others she brought the fire flash into the dark eye of her listening and gifted son. His ear was thus early attuned to the old minstrelsy of the country, its spirit finding a permanent resting-place in his soul, to come forth in after years, clothed in more graceful forms than it had ever assumed in the "elden time." In his soul were kindled those emotional feelings and desires which subsequently glowed into a poetic fire of sentiment or emotion, whereby he saw old truths in new and attractive lights, which he embodied in his immortal lyrics.

The "Gentle Shepherd" had been nearly thirty years before the public when Burns first saw the light. The poem had by that time so permeated all classes of society as to become the fire-side companion of a large number or section, cultured as well as uncultured, among the people of Scotland. Ramsay's inimitable pastoral had found its way into Ayrshire, and had entered the home of Burns' father while the son was still under the paternal roof. We picture to ourselves this singularly gifted youth—even then aglow with noble and manly sentiments, though unconscious of the powers with which he was endowed, yet destined to rise to the highest pinnacle of fame on which his admiring and loving countrymen could place him—sitting by his father's ingle, the day's toil

bility an Orkney man. It is more likely, therefore, that the name was originally derived from Burness, the name of a parish in the Orkneys.

(Signed) James Burness, M.D., Bombay Army.
To William Burness, Stonehaven."

o'er, reading with great and all absorbing interest, scene after scene, act after act of this inimitable pastoral. His whole being was kindled into an intensity of poetic emotion, such as none can even faintly realise save those who have experienced something of this spirit—a tempting subject for the genius of our best and most gifted Scottish limner. In the first flush, vigour, and bright enthusiasm of youth, amid the dawnings of his intellectual powers, so deeply impregnated with ardent poetic inspiration, he would peruse and re-peruse those masterly delineations of humble rural life, drawn by the magic touch of genius. But while thus stirred by the works of Ramsay, we learn from his letters that he did not confine himself to these. He was somewhat conversant with several of the plays of Shakespeare; the works of Pope, including his translation of the "Odyssey" and "Iliad"; Spencer, Macneill, Thomson, Shenstone, Gray, Blair, Beattie, Goldsmith; the "Life of Wallace," Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling," Macpherson's "Ossian," "The Spectator," Harvey's "Meditations," Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding," Robert Ferguson's poems, and others. Of most of these he was a confessed student and admirer, and was not a little indebted to some of them for turns of phrase and general tenor of reflection, and much of his imagery and sentiment were suggested by a close and earnest study of these works.

The last name on the list was more distinguished, though less fortunate than any of his contemporaries. Ferguson's poems had for Burns a peculiar charm, because of the remarkable facility of versification, play of fancy, humour, and vigorous description which they display. His exceptional misfortunes, long continued and severe, culminated in his death ere he had completed his twenty-fourth year. Over

his early but neglected grave, in Canongate Churchyard, Burns sought and obtained permission to erect a fitting memorial, on which he caused the following lines to be inscribed :—

"No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,
No storied urn, nor animated bust!
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er the poet's dust."

Ferguson's poems, of which "The Farmer's Ingle" is considered the most successful, came first before the public through the pages of "Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine," where their merits were at once acknowledged. They are faithful portraitures of scenes of rural life and traits of Scottish character, and must have made lasting impressions on the life and genius of Burns. They further possess all the simplicity, the natural impulse and emotion, the bird-like utterance which characterise the songs of the true lyrical poet.

The works of another countryman, James Thomson, author of "The Seasons," and other popular poems, must have powerfully influenced Burns' poetic sensibilities. That he was well versed in these may be seen from a perusal of his "Address to the Shade of Thomson," written on the occasion of his crowning the Poet's bust at Ednam with a wreath of bays :—

"And long, sweet Poet of the year,
Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won;
While Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that Thomson was her son!"

Thomson's poems display great originality of conception, refinement of diction, and poetic imagery. It was he who first gave faithful and fascinating pictures of the rolling mysteries of the year, showing that its seasons are but the varied manifestations of the One Great God. His delineations and descriptions powerfully impress his readers with the magnificence of nature, as exhibited in the circling seasons—soul-cheering spring, the birth-time of nature; glorious

summer, the effulgence of nature's choicest beauties; abundant autumn, nature clothed in her garb of gold; and cheerless winter, nature stripped of her attractive beauties, and enshrouded in the attire of death. The varied year in its endlessly diversified forms—in its long looked for birth, in its youth and vigour, in its full-grown manhood, in its rich and graceful decline, and in its majestic death—is all so faithfully and exquisitely portrayed by Thomson as to place his works among the classics of our literature.

"The Minstrel," by Beattie, is at once highly conceived and admirably finished. Lord Lyttelton says of it—"I read it with as much rapture as poetry in her sweetest, noblest charms ever raised to my mind. It seemed to me that my once most beloved Thomson was come down from heaven, refined by the converse of purer spirits than those he lived with here, to let me hear him sing again the beauties of nature and finest feelings of virtue, not with human, but with angelic strains."

It has long held its place among our best classic poems, because of the beauty and elegance of its language, the harmony of its versification, the richness of its imagery, the soft and genial flow of the most sublime, delicate, and pathetic sentiment, combined with the most exquisite taste. The first Book of the Minstrel was published in 1770, and, four years later, the second was issued—twenty-two years before the death of Burns, with whom, doubtless, it must have been a great favourite.

Hector Macneill's reputation as a poet and song-writer was well established before Burns rose to fame. His poem, "Scotland's Scaith, or the History of Will and Jean," first appeared in 1795, nearly two years before the death of Burns, and soon rose to great popularity. In 1801 Macneill issued an edition of his poems in two volumes. Other

editions followed. Several of his songs, such as "My Boy Tammy," "Come under my Plaidie," "Saw ye my Wee Thing," and his touching ballad, "Donald and Flora," have long enjoyed great popularity, and may not be surpassed by similar productions of any Scottish poet, save Burns, to whom they were well known, and by whom they were carefully studied.

The author of "The Grave," Rev. Robert Blair, born at Edinburgh, 1699, ordained minister of Athelstaneford, East Lothian, in 1731, was an accomplished scholar, and a man of no mean acquirements in scientific and general knowledge. The poem was written antecedent to its author assuming the sacred functions of the ministry, but its publication was held in abeyance for some time. It was, however, ultimately submitted to the judgment of the celebrated Dr Watts, who wrote approvingly of it, and recommended its publication. It was accordingly issued in 1743, and again in 1747. The poem was received by all classes as a highly finished and very powerful production. Campbell considered that "the eighteenth century had produced few specimens of blank verse of so familiar and simple a character as that of 'The Grave.'" Pinkerton says—"It is the best piece of blank verse we have, save that of Milton;" while Southey speaks of it in his "Life of Cowper" as the only poem he could recall as having been written in imitation of the "Night Thoughts." This, however, could not be, as "The Grave" was written before Young's great poem. It was one of the most popular productions of the last century, and from the first took its place among the standard classics of our poetical literature—its language and imagery being free, natural, and picturesque, though somewhat gloomy. Blair has been charged with having enriched his poem by many beautiful thoughts and elegant expressions from other

poets, which he failed to acknowledge. Be this as it may, it cannot be gainsaid that he has enriched our poetic literature by largely contributing to its stores from his own poetic wealth. The poem was well known to Burns, and by him highly esteemed.

It is apparent that Burns was well versed in upwards of a score at least of well-reputed standard authors of the eighteenth century. The old idea that he was something akin to "an illiterate and isolated prodigy," who, "without models, or with models only of the meanest sort," fought his way to the front ranks in literature simply by sheer force of native genius, as the "Sage of Chelsea" would have us believe, is no longer tenable. That he was endowed with genius of a high order goes without saying; but he would have been a genius such as has never yet appeared had he been what Carlyle represents.

Burns was wise enough to avail himself of the literary inheritance of his country far beyond what is generally supposed, and he valued highly all that had grown and was garnered by his predecessors for the common good, as unfailing springs of intellectual culture. Did space permit, instances could be given of his indebtedness to Shenstone, Edward Young, Goldsmith, Gray, Ferguson, and others. Let a few suffice. If "The Cottar's Saturday Night" be carefully compared with Shenstone's "Schoolmistress," in both of which we have the perfect form of the Spencerian stanza, it will be found that as regards treatment and language, measure and style, Burns moulded "The Cottar" less after the manner of Shenstone, than of Ferguson's "Farmer's Ingle." Still suggestive resemblances to the former are apparent, not so much for sentiment as style. If we compare the stanza of "The Cottar" beginning 'They chant their artless notes in simple guise," and the two that follow, with the XII. and XIV. of the

"Schoolmistress," we can scarcely fail to perceive a suggestive likeness.

Burns must have been a close and appreciative student of the character and art of Goldsmith. The direct references to the Irish poet in the letters of Burns, the quotations from "The Traveller," and the "Deserted Village," incorporated and assimilated with his own, and the use of excerpts as mottoes for popular pieces, clearly show his love and admiration for the man and his productions.

Both poets had much in common. They were marked by a keen appreciation and admiration of the beauties of Nature. She had bestowed on both many choice gifts—powers of conception and expression—quickness of perception in grasping and appropriating ideas suited to their requirements, which found utterance in forcible and graphic language, in virtue of which it became their own. They also possessed unusual tenderness and sensitiveness of heart for suffering humanity, and pled the cause of the poor, when down trodden and oppressed, and loved the humble virtuous peasant and his lowly train. Goldsmith's lines:—

> "To me more dear, congenial to my heart
> One native charm than all the gloss of art,"

were re-echoed by Burns in his felicitous tale, "The Twa Dogs," thus:—

> "'There's sic parade, sic pomp of art,
> The joy can scarcely reach the heart."

Both poets had mused and meditated long and deeply on the mysteries of life, and the sources from which happiness springs. Experience and observation alike had taught them that it comes neither from social position, riches, nor educational attainments, but from the disposition and condition of the heart. This highest earth boon—happiness—is not outside of us, as a thousand times ten thousand of our species

have supposed; who, scheming successfully for self-aggrandizement, and, while securing riches by questionable devices, have made certain ship-wreck of their own and others' peace of mind and contentment of heart—a golden truth worthy of being written on the tablets of the memory as with a diamond.

Over and against the great moral precept, and as an incentive to the one and a deterrent from the other—that the right-doer will be rewarded and the wrong-doer punished—there is the still higher motive, that it is right to do right because it is divinely commanded. Only in right-doing can our highest nature be developed, and become God-like, such a nature being necessarily of slow growth.

Goldsmith's definition of the source of true happiness has been often quoted :—

> "Still to ourselves in every place consign'd
> Our own felicity we make or find."

Burns, thoughtful on many subjects, carefully studied this all-important one; and though, unfortunately for himself and many of his countrymen, his actions were often too much, and very sadly at variance with his precepts, it seems generally allowed that he made up his mind in the definite and pronounced manner indicated in these lines :

> "Nae treasures, nor pleasures
> Could make us happy lang:
> The heart aye's the part aye
> That makes us right or wrang."

And further—

> "If happiness hae not her seat
> And centre in the breast,
> We may be wise, or rich, or great,
> But never can be blest."
>
> *First Epistle to Davie.*

These are but a few of many similarities of sentiment. There are also close resemblances in language. Let two suffice. Goldsmith's lines :—

> "In all my wanderings round this world of care
> In all my griefs, and God has given my share,"

are beautifully paraphrased by Burns thus :—

"In a' my share of care and grief
Which fate has largely given,
My hopes, my comfort, and relief
Are thoughts of her and Heaven."

Epistle to Davie.

Lastly, Goldsmith has these lines :—

"Who quits the world where strong temptations try,
And since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly."

Burns follows with the well-known couplet :—

"In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye,
I dare not combat, but I turn and fly."

A carefully observant student will soon discover that there are many similar parallels.

Let us now turn to the poems of Shenstone, with a similar object. These took early hold of Burns from the time he first saw them in his seventeenth year, and held their sway to the close of life's short span. From them he seems to have caught much of his inspiration. In 1783 he wrote—"My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his Elegies."

There is also a direct reference to him in the preface to the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' poems, as "that celebrated poet whose divine Elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species." Three examples are all our space admits. In the seventh Elegy we find the following :—

"Stranger, he said, amid this pealing rain,
Benighted, lonesome, whither wouldst thou stray?
Does wealth or power thy weary step constrain?"

Turning to Burns' "Man was made to Mourn," we find a similar venerable figure introduced as speaking thus :—

"Young stranger, whither wanderest thou?
Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain?"

Again, in the sixth Elegy, we have these lines :—

"Sing on my bird!—the liquid notes prolong,
Sing on my bird!—'tis Damon hears thy song."

While Burns' opening lines in the Sonnet, on hearing a thrush sing in January, run thus :—

> "Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough
> Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain."

Shenstone, writing of buoyant youth and its high hopes, says :—

> "O youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest!
> Then glows the breast, as opening roses fair,"

which Burns paraphrased in his "Ode to Despondency," when reviewing the period of childhood, thus :—

> "Ye tiny elves that guileless sport,
> Like linnets in the bush,
> Ye little know the ills ye court,
> When manhood is your wish!"

We are tempted to trespass yet again by a short reference to the indebtedness of the National Bard to the author of "Night Thoughts." These proved a very magazine of thought and phraseology to various classes of poets during last century—to Beattie, Goldsmith, and others; while even in some of the finer passages of Cowper and Burns his influence is clearly traceable. It is an open question—when and how Burns became so deeply imbued with Young's great work, but there is no doubt that he read and pondered it often and carefully, and that much of its thoughts are interwoven with his own. On one occasion he wrote to Clarinda—"I have been this morning taking a peep through—as Young finely says—the dark portion of time long elapsed."

While traces of Shenstone's influence are apparent in the piece, "Man was made to Mourn," there seems also that of Young. "Man's inhumanity to Man" is an oft quoted line in the complaint of Burns. If we turn to Young's "Third Night," we find these lines :—

> "Man hard of heart to man—
> Man *is to* man the sorest, surest ill."

Still further, in the "Fifth Night," we find the line :—

> "Inhumanity is caught from man.'

In the "Ninth Night," are these :—

> "Turn the world's history : what find we there?
> Man's revenge . . . . .
> And inhumanities to man."

Again, in "A Man's a Man for a' That"—which is understood to be the exponant of Burns' political creed—we have these lines :—

> "The rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that."
>
> "The honest man, tho' e'er so poor,
> Is king o' men for a' that."
>
> "Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
> Wha struts an' stares and a' that?
> Though hundreds worship at his word,
> He's but a coof for a' that.
> For a' that, and a' that,
> His riband, star, and a' that:
> The pith o' sense an' pride o' worth
> Are higher rank than a' that."

In the "Sixth Night" of The Complaint we have these lines :—

> "External homage and a supple knee
> To beings pompously set up!
> . . . . All more is Merit's due,
> Her sacred and inviolable right,
> Nor ever paid the monarch but the man,
> Our hearts ne'er bow but to superior worth.
> . . . . . .
> Each man makes his own stature . . .
> High worth is elevated place;
> Makes more than monarchs, makes an honest man;
> Tho' no exchequer it commands, 'tis wealth:
> And, though it wears no riband, 'tis renown."

On comparing these lines with those immediately preceding, it will be at once apparent that Burns was familiar with the latter; and that between both sets of quotations there are unmistakable resemblances, drawn by masterly hands both; standing to each other in the relative positions of a first bold outline, and that of a finished picture—the latter being the perfect lyric of the National Bard.

In Burns' "Song of Death" we have these lines:—

"Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame."

While, in the "Fifth Night," occurs the line:—

"Death loves a shining mark, a single blow."

Many more similarities could be given to show that Burns was familiarly conversant with Young: let these suffice.

Coincidences of thought and expression might be also pointed out in our National Poet and his favourite authors—Ramsay, Ferguson, Pope, Macneill, Beattie, and others, but our limits forbid us following this theme further.

To some this may appear to detract from the originality of Burns: to those most competent to form an opinion, it does not. Chaucer in his "Tales," Shakespeare in his "Plays," Bacon in his "Essays," Milton in his Poems, Macaulay in his prose and poetry, and a host of others are open to the charge. Pedantry of this type, however, may without hesitation be set aside. What these masters touched they embellished—they found dry bones, and breathed into them life. No one intellect, be it ever so gigantic, can climb these highest heights unaided. Help is sought, and footholds found from predecessors; for it seems entirely beyond the power of the most gifted author to originate the thoughts contained in his works. These coming from close reading, and long and earnest study, have grown with his growth, increased and strengthened with his years, and he has instinctively moulded and assimilated them mentally, as he does his food physically.

The powers of conception and expression are not always found in unison. The former is often possessed while the latter is withheld. When united, as they were in such masters of thoughts and words as Ramsay, Burns, and Scott, there is all the difference between genius and mediocrity.

The production of new and original ideas, and their happy combination in an attractive manner, are very different things: the former is a rare attainment, the latter, while commoner, is no less a choice gift and high faculty.

We trust the reader will pardon this lengthy digression from the main line of discussion.

So early as Burns' sixteenth year, the "shy, retiring boy" felt the first emotions of love, and simultaneously came the desire to rhyme—aroused, doubtless, by the incident that his partner in the harvest field was a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lassie," and sang so sweetly that it was to her favourite reel he composed his first song, "Handsome Nell," of which he wrote—"It was done at an early period of my life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity, unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of the wicked world. It has many faults, but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, and my blood rallies at the remembrance."

The emotional and passionate fire thus enkindled never died out, but glowed fervently in the dark and brilliant eye. It was fed by one love affair after another, which seems to have been the chief influence acting on quick feelings and a powerful imagination. Even in those early days his heart seems to have been occasionally stirred to its depths by a perception of his powers—"deeply drawing"—which grew seemingly into a conviction that he had a work to do, a mission to fulfil. Henceforth there flowed those inimitable poems, in which are united fine imagery, natural and imaginative description; with sublimity of language, and fertility of thought, delineating the emotions of youth and love, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, hope and despair; age, retrospect, and resignation, which ever since have exerted such

wondrous fascination—the perennial source of the joy and pride of his loving countrymen at home and abroad.

Early in 1786 Burns made known his desire to publish a volume of his poems. The proposal was so favourably responded to that the publication of an edition of six hundred copies was finally resolved on. The work was issued from the provincial press of John Wilson, bookseller in Kilmarnock. During June and July of that year Burns was engaged in revising the proofs of those now world-famed poems, which were destined to attain such a unique position in the permanent literature of his country, and secure for their author imperishable fame. The volume itself has long held a first place among the most highly prized of our book treasures. Originally published for five shillings, the present value of a really good copy cannot be far short of one hundred guineas, and as time rolls on it will doubtless become increasingly valuable.

Burns could scarcely credit the reality of the name and fame his volume had brought. The blood must have flown to his cheek—man though he was—in a vivid crimson wave, when he so suddenly and unexpectedly rose to fame. The key note of his secret aspirations had been unlocked, and his fondest hopes were far exceeded. Even when the first edition of his poems had been exhausted, and after his arrival in Edinburgh—where he was patronised by "The Lounger," and lionised by the *literati* of the metropolis—his modesty compelled him to write:—"I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame in a language where Shenstone and Gray had drawn a tear." In "The Vision," a poem couched in the highest strain of poetical genius, Burns describes the art of both these favourites, in

the grace of its pathetic touch, as quite beyond the range of his own fervid genius :—

> "Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
> To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
> Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
> With Shenstone's art;
> Or pour with Gray, the moving flow
> Warm on the heart."

In contradistinction to this modest estimate of himself may be set that of the late Professor Wilson, of Christopher North celebrity, who echoes but the universal opinion. He says :—"Burns was by far the greatest poet that ever sprang from the bosom of the people, and lived and died in humble circumstances and condition, who will ever be regarded as the glorious representative of the genius of his country, on which alone rests the perpetuity of his fame."

It is generally allowed that his gift of original thought was very marked; still his gift of original expression has been estimated as even greater. His powers of perception, assimilation, concentration, and condensation are considered to have been exceptional: all these found utterance in forcible and graphic language, in which, what he drew from others, became under his magic touch—his own.

Did ever the fire of self-sacrificing chivalry and patriotic self-abandonment burn more intensely and blaze higher than in "Bruce's address to his Army at Bannockburn." Of thought and sentiment embodying a living principle we have that inimitable lyric—"A man's a man for a' that." In what full measure of mystic lore, and felicitous diction—a Shaksperian blending of tragedy and comedy, are such poems as "Tam o' Shanter," and "The Jolly Beggars." Both humour and fancy play around such pieces as "John Anderson my jo John." "The Death of poor Mailie," "The Jolly Beggars," "Tam Samson's Elegy," and a host of others. What exquisite tenderness and pathos are infused into his amatory lyrics, and matchless love

songs. What passionate sentiment is disclosed in the one where he sings of "Mary in Heaven," and "Mary that sleeps by the murmuring stream." In these feeling and intellect are happily blended, while in the highest lyrics the former is generally allowed to predominate. Poetry cannot go deeper than the feelings of the heart. It is the true exponent of them. It was during the last few years of his life that Burns threw his whole genius into song, for that was the form of literature he had loved from his cradle—home, sweet home, being redolent with the voice of song, his mother's memory being richly stored with the old tunes of her native country, which she sung to her eldest son from his cradle all through boyhood. This took deep root, for the book he most prized was an old song-book, which became his daily companion.

Thoughts, sentiments, or emotions laid hold of Burns with such force that the joys and sorrows he depicts so graphically became his own; while intensity was his more characteristic part—kindling his soul into its warmest glow. There is nothing artificial in his thoughts, feelings, and desires: all is natural, and true to the actualities of the human heart. Thus it is that the peasantry of Scotland have all along loved their National Bard, it may be, as fervently as ever people loved a poet. Through his poems—so full of the fine flavour of old vernacular humour and dialect often passing into deep pathos—there came a sympathy for him such as nothing else could have evoked. They express the thoughts and feelings, manners and customs of peasants, shepherds, and small moorland farmers in the language and phrases they used at their firesides. They interpret to each

class its own inner life. No wonder the people loved these songs, in which their desires, hopes, and aspirations are reflected. Patriotism, as therein exhibited, roused the national spirit which had so long lain dormant. His writings, with a marked individuality of their own, have deeply moved and greatly influenced his countrymen all through the century. It is now generally allowed that Scottish song culminated in Burns.

True poetry can scarcely earn its title chiefly through a dexterity in so arranging and adjusting words that a musical cadence falls softly on the ear. Every true poem, at all worthy the name, must possess noble and pathetic thought as the foundation of the superstructure. This being secured, there can be thrown around the subject a robe of appropriate expression which cannot be too natural, or too delicate and musical.

True poetry touches man's soul, and appeals to the imagination—that faculty enfolding the springs of being—the potencies of the inner higher life. Scottish song and story are central in touch, inexhaustible in resources: poetic wealth of green fields and mountain breezes unwrought, undiscovered—still waiting to enrich and beautify the natural soul and character.

The first number of "Johnston's Musical Museum" appeared during the year Creech issued the first Edinburgh edition of Burns' poems, its main object being to preserve and improve the songs and music of Scotland. It should not be overlooked that the oldest musical airs of Scotland are in general older than the words with which they are now associated, and have often proved the inspirers of these—two, or it may be three sets of words having followed each

other to the same tune. To Johnston's work Burns was solicited to contribute, and he wrote some songs for it.

He brought from obscurity a still greater number that in their original dress were either too uncouth, or too indecent—robing them anew in befitting language.

A greater than Johnston, however, appeared in the person of George Thomson of Edinburgh, who was fortunate in securing the assistance of Burns, and with his aid did more than any of his predecessors to give Scottish song and music the world-wide celebrity it has long enjoyed.

While all this is fully and freely acknowledged, it is at the same time believed that Burns moulded many of his pieces on ground work laid to hand by his predecessors, and that to many of them he was largely indebted. The times in which he lived were most opportune for a National Bard, for behind him there was a great background of song centuries old, which formed a great storehouse of inspiration. The touch of his genius transmuted these inferior metals into gold.

A very marked instance of this is found in what may be regarded as the best known and most widely diffused of Scottish songs—"Auld Lang Syne." Here the soft lowland dialect, intermingled with the more northerly Doric, and formed a "perfect instrument" in the hands of Burns. It greatly surpasses our present English in its simplicity and *naivete*, and could not be rendered into present-day language in its fluency and flow. If we substitute for "Auld Lang-syne," "Old Long Since Ago," all its fine flavour is gone. Both the poetry and music of this fine old piece, as we now have it, were developed from that which existed long prior to the days of Burns. Thus it is, in both its parts, an example of the

evolution of art. The earliest known form of the song appears so far back as the Bannantyne M.S. It again saw the light in somewhat altered guise in Watson's collection of Scottish poems, published in 1711, and subsequently in Ramsay's "Tea-Table Miscellany," issued in 1724.*

In a letter of Burns to Mrs Dunlop, dated 17th December 1788, enclosing a copy of the song as revised by himself, he wrote—"There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled my soul," and he apostrophised it in these words—"Light lie the turf on the breast of the heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment."

We do not for one moment vindicate what has been styled the occasional coarseness and vulgarity of a few of Burns' poems; still, it is only justice to record that in these respects his literary failings are few compared with some of his predecessors. These arose chiefly from vitiated associates, through whose influence he showed a want of self-reliance, and a lack of self-mastery, and through whom the safeguards of his father's careful religious instruction and training did not prevent sad excesses in the gratification of his impetuous passions, which, alas, he found hard to restrain, and fatal to indulge, and which overbore the voice of conscience, from want of power to obey its dictates. It would, have imparted additional lustre to his name, and

* *The Tea Table Miscellany*, as its name implies, was intended to supply the more educated citizens of Edinburgh, in their social gatherings, with a selection of the best Scottish National Melodies. In this way were introduced to the drawing-rooms of the *literati*, those beautiful musical airs or songs, with the words, which had their "setting" mid the atmosphere of lowly rural cottages.

greatly increased his moral power, as well as the usefulness and influence of his poems and life-work, had he not permitted a single word savouring of the immoral to drop from his lips, or flow from his pen. And it would have been well for himself and his countrymen had all his writings been inspired with the high moral tone exhibited in that sublime production, "The Cottar's Saturday Night"—a poem, the perusal of which inspires us with the conviction that man's true dignity does not rest on mere transient external circumstances, but on the high standard of his moral nature: a poem which has thrown a halo of sanctity around the life of that portion of the Scottish peasantry in whose dwellings an altar has been reared for the simple and loving worship of our Great Creator and Father.

Scott had scarcely completed his sixteenth year when he first saw "the peasant bard," in the Scottish Capital, in December 1786. Burns was then in the full vigour of youthful bloom, with a noble countenance lit up with large, dark, flashing eyes, a strongly knit frame, and a nervous temperament tremblingly delicate.

The unique volume was at once hailed by all classes as one containing poetry of a high order, which, notwithstanding its acknowledged faults and defects in language and sentiment, has, beyond all doubt, the great merit of possessing intense life-pervading and life-breathing truth. It is the offspring of the fulness of the poetic inspiration, and exhibits the extraordinary powers with which its author was endowed; for it is believed that its pages bear the evidence that to him belongs the honour of having struck the lyric cords with a depth, truth, and beauty of expression unrivalled by the songs of any other nation.

Wit, sentiment, and passion glow on its pages,

through the native dialect he so much loved, in short and concentrated outbursts of great beauty and fidelity of language. It came straight from, and goes straight to the heart, thrilling it by its masterly touches of nature, thus making his world of readers all akin.

There are strong humanising elements running through all his poems,—unsophisticated, unelaborated, simple, natural yet original, seemingly caught from his surroundings. His utterances are simple, straight-forward, yet dignified. His modes are large and human, and seem akin to the forms of primary thought, and often possess a grandeur rarely if ever heard till then. The capable reader soon becomes conscious that he is in the presence of a master spirit, whose thoughts and expressions bear an intimate relation to universal humanity, as well as to himself, and thus possess a vital relation to all.

From this it may be inferred that he carefully avoided the artificial and conventional style, which rather vitiated the poetry of many of his predecessors, his aim being, apparently, to return to the elemental in subject, and to the natural in language, in his delineations and descriptions of homely themes taken from lowly everyday life.

When stirred by their environments his thoughts flowed gently like a stream, broad and placid, carrying on its bosom life and growth of its own kind, to all who care to drink of its waters; or, under the impulse of strong passion and vivid imagination, expressing himself in language vehement and strong, full of warm feeling, or bitter denunciation, like a rushing torrent with the lightning's glare o'erhead. Thus his portraitures of Scottish life and manners—while rough and ready, broad and strong—are in their main aspects true.

He appears before his countrymen in no false

guise,—a rustic poet in homely garb, using his native dialect as the medium for describing scenes and incidents alike in nature and human life and character, for the delight and solace of his countrymen.

One great precious truth runs like a golden thread through his poems—the noble sentiment so dear to man, — individuality and independence —the real spiritual co-equality of all true-hearted men, notwithstanding great disparity of outward rank and condition. This forms the central truth in his teaching, encouraging all to struggle bravely in life's daily battle. The priceless legacy which he has left is intrinsically and universally human in its portrayal of Fact and Nature; and so it is that the works of the chief of Scotland's lyric poets have gradually won for their author the highest literary eminence on which his countrymen, from the palace to the cot, can place him; and from that lofty and enduring pedestal it is their delight to view him as "The Greatest National Poet."

Burns wrote much, if his narrow forbidding environments are to be taken into account; still it is believed that his literary life-work is but a tithe of what it might have been. May it not be that what we possess give but glimpses of his perfervid genius? Many of his poems are the results of occasional outbursts when under fits of depression, sore-stricken poverty, or bitter disappointment—written, too, often on the spur of the moment, when in a high state of nervous excitement. They often came like the flash of a meteor, at other times they were the product of considerable thought; still the suggestion has great force that many of them are imperfect and fragmentary to what they might have been had leisure and a moderate competency been his. The full force of his intellectual vigour—gathered from increased culture, experience, and leisured length of days—were never his; so that

what we have are but as sparks from the anvil; such as are, however, rarely seen.

It is pleasing to know that Scott's mother was well acquainted with the poetry of her day, particularly that of Ramsay and Burns, though neither the names of Scott's father, nor that of his mother, nor of their more illustrious son, appear on the list of subscribers to that now famous and much coveted first Edinburgh edition of 1776.

Scott was born at Edinbugh on 15th August 1771, and was fully thirty years of age ere his first important work was issued. He had thus education and leisure, also close and frequent intercourse with a large circle to help him forward in the accomplishment of his self-imposed task: time for frequent visits to the original sources, scenes, and haunts whence his ballads sprang; time for study, meditation, and observation; time for the maturing and ripening of his great intellectual powers. The Fates were favourable to the fostering and development of his genius.

Burns' death took place when Scott had just passed his twenty-fifth birthday; but nine years elapsed ere he showed that the mantle of him whom he so much revered had fallen upon himself.*

* On the occasion of Burns' visit to Edinburgh in 1786-87, he received an invitation from the late Professor Ferguson (among others) to meet several of the *literati* of the city at his house. Scott was then a lad of fifteen, yet had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in the poetry of Burns, whom he longed to know. Along with other youths, Scott was present on the occasion, for he says—"We youngsters sat silent, looked, and listened."

During the entertainment, Burns became interested in a picture on the wall of the apartment, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his widow, with a child in her arms on one side, his dog on the other, while underneath were some touching lines of which none present, save Scott, could give the authorship, whereupon Burns "rewarded the youth

Scott's first highly popular publication of note—"The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," in two volumes, published in 1802—at once secured for him no mean place in the republic of letters. These poetical legends of the "Green Border hills" he collected during numerous visits to the romantic wilds of the border land, in which, it may be said, he was partly cradled. He spent most of the leisure of his youth and early manhood in gathering every ballad, border song, and romantic legend which still lingered there. The Minstrelsy was thus the product of great labour and long research. Not only did he collect, but he also annotated these ballads—his previous efforts in translating some German productions having developed this latent talent, thus encouraging him to assume the position of an original ballad-writer, and several of his own happily marvellous imitations of these are interspersed throughout the "Minstrelsy."

with a look and a word which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure."

This scene in the lives of these two illustrious Scotchmen is given by Lockhart, and forms the subject of a life-like picture, by Mr Martin Hardie, now (1894) hanging on the walls of the Royal Academy at Edinburgh. The venerable Professor is represented sitting in his arm chair, poker in hand to stir the fire, his arm meanwhile arrested as he looks up to view Burns who, facing Scott, clad in schoolboy garb of the time, is gazing intently, though with a look of diffidence, at the peasant bard—the greatest nature-taught Scottish poet.

The large canvas is peopled with a goodly number of the brilliant men of the period, while the subject and its treatment is allowed to possess so great an interest that the picture will possibly be the most popular one in this year's exhibition.

The works of both Scott and Burns have furnished more subjects for book illustration than any other Scottish writers, and form, in the main, the chief subjects of the illustrated works issued yearly during the past half century by the Society for the "Propagation of the Fine Arts in Scotland."

The publication of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," in 1805, when Scott was in his thirty-fourth year, at once set the seal of public approval on a work so full of picturesque incident, in an exceptionally marked manner; and by the publication of the two poems that followed in rapid succession—"Marmion," and the "The Lady of the Lake" (the latter credited with being the best of his poetical works), and by those that subsequently appeared, this success was both increased and confirmed.

In the field of metrical romance Scott's supremacy stands unquestioned. In a letter to Ellis, in 1802, Scott speaks of a ballad on which he was then engaged, and the stanza chosen as a "kind of romance of border chivalry in a light-horse sort of stanza." His original idea was to insert it in the "Minstrelsy," but after submitting the manuscript to Wordsworth, Jeffrey, and others, he yielded to their solicitations, and extended the poem into an independent metrical romance. Its sale was beyond all precedent. The poem addressed itself to the past history of Scottish chivalry, and burned with such a glow of bardic inspiration as to strike a note that roused into enthusiasm the half-slumbering poetic national mind. It also revived a love for old metrical romances that seemed till then as dead as were the knights and lovers who formed their central figures.

Thus the publication of "The Lay" laid the foundation of Scott's fame as an original poet, both from the novelty of style and treatment of subject, and the spirit and power with which it, and those that followed, were written. His countrymen were convinced that a poet possessing original genius had appeared, whose works added fresh laurels to our National Literature. There is both motion and buoyancy in the best passages of his poetry, which

thrills the heart and stirs the imagination, as few poets can equal.

Are not these two favoured sons of song, Burns and Scott, fittingly denominated the masters of the Scottish Lyra—bright and inspiring examples of the high position which can be won by energy, perseverance, purpose, and intensity of aim, working towards the development of great natural gifts? And are not their works evidence that they uttered music rarely approached, that they stand head and shoulders above their fellows in their chosen art, that therein they move in another and higher sphere?

To Scott were given mental qualities such as few men possess: an heroic soul, gigantic energy, great concentration and quickness of perception, retentive memory in a high degree—keenly alive to, and greatly influenced by the martial spirit and social customs of feudal times, and profoundly impressed by the rich and varied scenery of his native land. His poems show the epic inspiration, and give us life-like descriptions of the ancient manners and customs of our forefathers — in their wooing and warring, sporting and hunting, fighting and killing. And this amid scenes of ancient chivalry and knightly daring, with the huntsman's bugle ringing in our ears to the call of feudal customs and traditions. These he presents in great richness of colouring and variety of scenery, abounding with incidental touches and delicate shades of expression, causing these word-painted pictures to stand as exquisite transcripts of our native scenery almost, if not altogether unrivalled.

Scott's material had lain hidden in feudal times, which had passed away ere his day—had lain like skeletons in the valley of forgetfulness, till, by his genius he brought it into life, and clothed it in new garb, bringing it afresh into action, and in a guise and form suited to modern sympathies.

Every old castle, ivied tower, or ruined fortalice which came within his range was transformed in his vivid and fertile imagination—tenanted anew with "Lords and Ladies gay," with their numerous retainers, and a long procession of historical and ideal figures, all of whom, imaged in his mind, seemed to move before his eyes as really as when the banquet-hall was lit in the elden time. Every fair domain, ancient battle field, craggy steep, moorland fell, or mountain pass famous in Scottish story, were, by the magic of his creative genius, peopled anew, as by Homeric fire, with all the excitement of the tournament, or with clans fighting out in deadly combat their bitter feuds, or the armies of two gallant nations struggling for ascendency. Has he not thus by enriching the literature of his country annexed new territory to the human soul?

His touch lit up fair Melrose, Dunvegan, and other ruined piles, casting a halo and a fascination round these such as no other poet has equalled; while, by a wave of his wand, stretched over the battlefields of Bannockburn, Flodden, and other historic spots, he has given an interest all its own to these, and to our national struggles for liberty and independence.

He possessed the power to stir the soul with a sort of ecstasy and boundless enthusiasm, such as few poets ever displayed. It has been affirmed that he often had a kind of hare-brained "light in his eye," which sparkles in his finer passages, whether poetry or prose.

The more truly and intelligently Scott's poetic romances are read and studied, the more will it be perceived that he has bequeathed to his country a great national inheritance. Apart from the charm of his metrical romances, his lyrics alone secure for him a lasting place in the literature of his country. "Jock o' Hazeldean," "The Cavalier," "The Pibroch

of Doniel Dhu," "Rosabella," "Alice Brand," "Allan-a-dale," "Brignal Banks," "Norah's Vow," "Lochinvar," and many others have long been household songs, and will hold their high place as long as closeness and vigour of thought and elegance of style are coupled with tenderness and melody, cheerfulness and highly sensitive humour. They please the ear, gratify the taste, and touch the heart.

His songs—those of Burns also—made the tour of the world more than half a century ago; are read and sung in every country and clime; and are held in everlasting remembrance. The songs of both poets are an inspiration and exposition of the love of home, kindred, and country. As a lyrist Scott assails us, as with a *reveillez* from verdant woods where the hart has been tracked, and the roe-buck ensnared to his fall; he identifies us with outlaws whose daring exploits he holds up to admiration; he associates us with freebooters and cavaliers who are "Prince Charlie's Men," and he keeps us in hall mid "dames and ladies high and fair."

Contemporary with Scott were John Leyden and James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd—the three greatest names in modern Border Poetry. From the former Scott received more assistance in the preparation of the first two volumes of the "Minstrelsy" than from any other. Leyden contributed two modern border ballads to the work—"Lord Soulis," and "The Cout of Keeldar"—both being of the romantic type, showing at the same time a loving sympathy with Nature in its varied aspects, as objects of poetic interest. He also contributed two odes—one "On Visiting Flodden Field"—the other "On Scottish Music," as well as the poem called "The Mermaid." Leyden's poetic fame rests mainly on his

poem, "The Scenes of Infancy," which is chiefly descriptive of his native valley in Teviotdale, but includes the entire district anciently known by that name. He was born in 1775, and died at Java in 1811.

Hogg was born at Ettrick Forest, Selkirkshire—the Arcadia of Scotland—towards the latter end of 1770. His ancestors had been shepherds for centuries. Owing to a severe reverse of family circumstances James was taken from school when but six years of age, and hired to herd cows, receiving as wages a "ewe lamb, and a pair of shoes every six months." The following year he was again sent to school for a single quarter, where he learnt to read the Bible, and write what was called "big text." This completed his education. What he subsequently achieved in the realm of letters was won by diligence and perseverance,—marvellous faculties when cultivated sedulously.

From childhood he was a lover of music, and taught himself the use of the violin, in which he ultimately excelled. His poems and lyrics early won a lasting place in the literature of his country, while the melody of language exhibited in his poem, "Kilmeny," has few equals. It is a remarkable production, even under the most favoured circumstances, but much more so when viewed in the light of his very meagre educational advantages.

It has been said of Hogg that he has never been surpassed in his descriptive weird poetic tales, and it is but rarely that one appears so gifted as to give permanent substantial form to floating fancies and traditions, and that in such exquisitely flowing and melodious verse. So magical are the fairy touches throughout his writings that one might almost be tempted to dream they had been transported to a world of light and shade, where "all things are

forgotten." Through his literary genius we can enter and explore that realm of fancy called Fairy-land, the belief in which, Scott affirms, lingered longest in this upland forest of Ettrick.

When quite a young man, the poems of Burns so stirred in him the spirit of emulation that, while tending his flocks along the hill sides and mid the pastoral solitudes of his native county, he carried writing materials with him, and taught himself the art. Thus did he place his first poem on paper. Other works stimulated his energies, such as Hamilton's edition of "The Life of Sir William Wallace," and Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd."

The picture he has drawn of himself at this early period is in these words:—"With my plaid about me, best mantle of inspiration, a beuk of auld ballants, as yellow as the cowslips, in my hand or bosom, and maybe, sir, my ink horn dangling at my button-hole, a bit stump o' pen, nae bigger than an auld wife's pipe, in my mouth, and a piece o' paper, torn out o' the hinder-end of a volume, crunkled on my knee." Be it remembered he could only read when he had reached the age of eighteen, and write when he was twenty-six. Notwithstanding these serious drawbacks, his genius surmounted numerous and formidable obstacles, and so exerted itself that he wrote those marvellously weird visions which have placed his name honourably among Scotland's most gifted sons.

In 1801 Scott visited Ettrick and Yarrow, and there met the young shepherd-bard, then about thirty years of age. Leyden introduced Scott to young Laidlaw, who in turn commended Hogg to his visitor as the "best qualified of any person in the Forest to assist him in his researches" after the ballad lore of that district for the completion of the third volume of "The Minstrelsy." Scott accompanied his future

steward to Ettrick house, the farm occupied by him and his parents, and was charmed with his new acquaintance. "He found," says Lockhart, "a brother poet, a true son of Nature and genius, hardly conscious of his powers," and was so successful that he remained several days in the district, visiting many places of historic interest in company with Laidlaw and Hogg, and gleaning an abundant harvest through the acquaintance of his protege with the older people, including Hogg's mother. The friendship thus formed lasted till Sir Walter's death.

Hogg's works, both in poetry and prose, are numerous, and have long been before the public in varied forms and editions. Professor Wilson, in reviewing "The Queen's Wake," wrote :—"Kilmeny alone places our shepherd among the Undying Ones." The works of these three poets,—Burns, Scott, and Hogg—have filled so many hearts, influenced so many lives, and stirred so many souls to their depths, that to weigh their effect on national literature and life and character is beyond computation or is an impossible undertaking.

True poetry has a higher mission to perform than simply to please the ear and gratify the intellectual taste. Its higher function is to expound great truths, which fill the mind and touch the heart, and in the nature of things are fitted to instruct and advance mankind. These the poet robes in weighty and powerful utterances, fitted to arrest and concentrate the attention; for it has long been a truism that the tendency of literature, and especially poetical literature, is to *subdue* the animosities, soften the feelings, elevate the affections, refine the heart, foster the growth of self-control and self-respect, and thus beautify, adorn, and purify the soul and life of man. Man thus endowed, how noble! God the endower—how transcendently noble!

A large majority of our species are lovers of music and poetry. There are sufficient musical tastes among men to enjoy the former, and enough of the latter faculty to enable them to derive pleasure therefrom. Both are the gifts of Nature, and were designed to be among our every day pleasures. But while the class capable of receiving these is *very large*, that qualified to impart them is *very small*,

If the highest class of musicians be few, the corresponding order of poets is still fewer. These are endowed with a rare combination—a masterful imagination, a fancy of great brilliancy, and a profound understanding—indeed all those qualities which go to constitute the true poet.

The world has not seen a second Homer, a Dante, a Virgil, a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Goethe, a Burns, or a Scott, so full-toned in compass that they seem to have fetched their harp strings from other spheres whereby their works have permeated the vital air of the world. A few of our poets endowed with one, or more, or all of those faculties, in a greater or less degree, have appeared as crescents radiant with brightness, or as the full grown moon in her Scythian splendour—their number—Oh how few!

Most, if not all of our great poets, have felt they had a high function to fulfil—a mission to their fellows, which was alike their duty and pleasure to deliver, and enforce faithfully and well. They occupy the high places of the world and are among the intensest thinkers, and stand in the vanguard of the great march of man's advancement, leading the way to further achievements; not mere dreamers—each gifted with his own mellifluous method of expressing weighty and powerful truths, full of significance and importance, in bright and inspiring lines. They consider it theirs so to present human life and action in its multifarious

aspects that a lodgment be secured in many minds, as seeds either of slow or rapid growth, ultimately blossoming out of the dust, and bearing fruit in its season on minds of varied culture and acquirement. Their utterances are what tens of thousands *feel* and appreciate, though devoid of the power of expressing—thus their message comes like a revelation.

It can scarcely be doubted that the works of those poets, who have produced the masterpieces of human genius, must necessarily possess great influence on an ever increasing circle of readers, moulding much of their thought and action. To all such our National Scottish Poetry and Song yield much pleasure and profit, enriching and sweetening their thoughts, and making their lives brighter and better, by sending forth a purifying influence, which in the nature of things becomes infused into the minds of others. Poetry is thus the language of man's awakened intellect, of his stimulated passions, of his devotion, and of all his higher mental conceptions and aspirations. Language, after all, is, in the first instance, the instrument of human thought. We ask the poet to give us thought as well as music. Then do those jewelled lines take a lasting place in the mind, and secure a firm hold on the memory. The intellectual triumphs of such poetry are very marked. It raised Burns from his toilsome daily task at the plough; Allan Cunningham from the drudgery of the quarry; Hogg from the shepherd's shieling; Tannahill from the dreary weaver's shuttle —and placed them, with many more of the tuneful brotherhood, "among the immortals."

Poetry is figurative and glowing speech in mellowed and majestic accents. It is thought passionately alive to the unfolding of its theme. If the thought be new and expressed with such beauty of word and rhythm *as to arrest attention*, and command study, Man will

be all the richer. The gift of melodious utterance is peculiarly Scottish, therefore to Scotsmen, where'er their lot is cast, their national poets are a never failing source of pleasure—many of their productions recounting early struggles for Scotland's liberty, holding up to our admiration the heroic acts of the great historic names in our national history, with all their noble traditions and associations. Patriotism is thereby nurtured, and becomes a vital force; the moral energy of the nation is thereby strengthened, and finds suitable expression.

It may here be noted, with perhaps a pardonable feeling of national Scottish pride, that the three most popular patriotic songs in the language were written by Scotsmen:—"Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," by Burns; "Ye Mariners of England," by Campbell; and "Rule Britannia," by Thomson. These, and a host of other lyrics, full of passion and pathos, dwell in the heart, and are like leaves of fresh laurel, ever sweet and pleasant—intertwined in the wreaths of Scottish fame.

The intellectual faculties of the few occasionally impress communities deeply and lastingly, beneficial or otherwise, according to the moral standard of their productions. Thus we naturally look to those who, by their great intellectual endowments, and by general consent wear the world's laurels as the greatest benefactors of our race. It does not seem to matter so much in what department of its affairs their efforts are put forth to make mankind their debtors; for if discoveries are made in one branch of study or science, others are stimulated, and further advances follow. It is evident that the race has been better and more enduringly benefited by the exceptional and the extraordinary among men, than by those who possess nothing beyond a modicum of ability and plain

common sense—though both are in themselves rich boons. Thus the world's progress has been more rapid in every department of literature, science, and art, by the inventions, conceptions, and productions of those endowed with exceptional genius. They strike out new paths, and in the main are the real pioneers of progress. The real value of genius lies in the truthfulness of its utterances, and in its utility to benefit the race.

If an examination were made of the class of literature which preceded the three great masters of the Scottish lyre, Burns, Scott, and Hogg in their respective spheres, the superiority of that which they left, as compared with what they found, and that which has to a considerable extent been produced as the result of their teachings, together with the part which that literature holds in our vital growth and civilization as a people, it would then be seen how much the country, and the entire English speaking race owe to them.

The work which the earliest of the three hoped to accomplish, but failed in some degree to do, was successfully performed by Scott—who may be said to have achieved his literary aspirations more fully than most men. He unlocked the stores which had hitherto been closed, and admitted his readers to new fields of thought, full of beauty and enchantment. His ideals were noble, his self-imposed task such as few, if any but himself, could have successfully accomplished. He resuscitated and fanned into flame our half-forgotten, semi-dead spirit of nationality, clothing it in new and inviting forms suggested by his genius and patriotism, which burned in him as a consuming fire. He conferred a new order of nobility on poets by the fruits of his genius; for from the story of incessant feuds and discords—from the blood, bones

and ashes of the Past he called into life and action all that was elevating, inspiring, and attractive in Scottish story, weaving it into an immortal wreath of garlands, for the adornment of the brow of Caledonia past, present, and future.

It is from this point of view—that one generation of poets have been succeeded by another, and that but for their predecessors, few, if any of them, would have sung so well and so sweetly—that we have dwelt so long on the services which some of our earlier native poets, from Thomas the Rhymer downwards, have rendered their country. Burns revived the national love for poetic literature, by stirring into life the thought and feeling of the country, by new and appropriate utterances suited to the pent-up feelings of humanity, thereby gaining the national ear, and so rousing national enthusiasm, that henceforth his songs formed part of the mother tongue of our race. The ground was thus cleared and the way paved for his successors and imitators, whose name is legion. Scott, by his metrical romances, ballads, and lyrics intensified and completed these—their united works standing out as land marks in the world's literature, and are as trees of knowledge whose fruit is pleasant to the taste.

They have been, and will continue to be, a vital force and influence expanding as years roll on. Scott was Scottish to the very core, and to him his native country is mainly indebted for its classic name and fame, and from its legendary lore he drew what inspiration there was in him. He is our Shakespeare, for by the spell of his single genius he has invested even our very soil with an interest and sentiment somewhat akin to that which drew from far both old and young to sacred spots and historic localities on pious pilgrimage.

Thus, though essentially distinct, the lyric poetry

of the one, and the minstrel-ballad poetry of the other mark both as the leaders of their country in these departments—the former being the chief exponent of song lore, the latter of metrical or ballad lore.

If other poets are less known than they ought to be, it is not because their works are unworthy of being carefully read, studied, and treasured. They suffer, then, as all co-workers do, where there is the dominancy of one or two master minds and personalities. Burns and Scott rear high their forms, but a very host of the brotherhood are behind and before, and may easily be found.

After the publication of Ramsay's works, and forward towards Burns' day, a love for Scottish song arose, and soon spread itself among all classes. Considerable additions were made to the common stock by eminent men of the time, and by ladies also, and not a few of our finest melodies belong to this period. Prominent among the lady songstresses belonging to, or in proximity with this time, were Grizzel Baillie, born 1665, died 1746, a native of the Border, and authoress of the well-known lyric, "Were na my heart light." She takes a first place among the earliest of the lady-band, who enriched and extended the lyric stores of their native land. Other ladies, allied by birth to those romantic Border counties, followed, chief among whom were Jane Elliot, born 1727, died 1805, and Mrs Cockburn, born 1712, died 1794, who, in her old age, became a friend of Scott in his boyhood. Both ladies wrote one song each, on the same subject, which attained celebrity, and became known as "The Flowers of the Forest"—that is, the fall of the youth of Selkirk on the field of Flodden. These two songs were first made known through the publica-

tion, in 1769, of David Herd's collection of "Scottish Songs: Ancient and Modern."

In Robert Chambers' edition of Scottish songs, published in 1829, will be found interesting reminiscences of Mrs Cockburn, by Scott, to which work we refer those of our readers who are interested in this and kindred subjects.

The names of other ladies belonging to the tuneful sisterhood who gave Scottish song the full advantage of female genius, and breathed into it a depth of feminine feeling and pathos, are Mrs Grant of Laggan, born 1755, died 1838; Mrs Hunter, born 1742, died 1821; Mrs Inglis, born 1774, died 1843; and Joanna Baillie, born 1762, died 1851, who, as a lyric poetess, is unsurpassed among her sex for depth of pathos, fulness of spirit, finely polished language, and a high strain of refined sentiment. Scott held her in great esteem for her many accomplishments, and fully appreciated her poetic talents, designating this nobly gifted woman—"the immortal Joanna."

Her works are numerous, and her songs will always occupy a conspicuous niche in the temple of Scottish song, for freshness, beauty of expression, and ripeness of thought. Of those well-known and long popular may be named "Woo'd and Married and a'," "Saw Ye Johnnie Comin'," "Poverty parts gude Company," "Hooly and Fairly," and "The Gowan glitters on the Sward," but there are very many more.

There are a goodly array of poets belonging to this period—*i.e.*, the close of last and opening quarter of this century—who stand out so conspicuously as song-writers, that they cannot be passed over in silence.

First may be named the Rev. John Skinner, long a clergyman of the Scottish Episcopal Church in the more northern portion of Aberdeenshire. He was largely endowed with good sense, simple healthy feel-

ing, Scottish humour and true nobility, and was spoken of as possessing the "soul of a gentleman, the genius of a poet, and the learning of a scholar." He draws direct from nature and humanity. His poems are marked by strong vitality; thus to him has been assigned no mean place among the song-writers of Scotland. His country owes him a deep debt of gratitude for such songs as "Tullochgorum," "Lizy Liberty," "The Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn," "Tune your Fiddles," "John o' Badenyon," "O, Why should Old Age so much wound us, O," "The Stipendless Parson," and "The Man of Ross."

Burns, writing to Skinner towards the end of 1787, says—"Tullochgorum's my delight. The world may think slightly of the craft of song-making if they please. . . . . There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-writers in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of imagination rest with you."

A song-writer of true simplicity and pure sentiment, ruling among poets by the sceptre of song, appeared in the person of Robert Tannahill, born at Paisley 1774, died 1810. He inherited from his mother a fervent poetic temperament. When but a school boy his genius flowered into song, and during his apprenticeship to the trade of a weaver—then a lucrative occupation in the west of Scotland—and while actually employed at the loom, his thoughts were absorbed in the composition of his songs, which were written on a rude temporary desk by his side. Thus were indited some of his best songs, such as "The dear Highland Laddie," "O, are ye sleeping, Maggie?" "The Braes o' Balquhither," "The Wood of Craigie Lea," "Jessie, the Flower o' Dunblane,"

"Gloomy Winter's now awa'," "Good Night, and Joy," and many others. Tannahill was a great enthusiast of the muse, his whole soul being lit up with its fire, which burned intensely to his sad and untimely death. About 1803, he fortunately made the acquaintance of R. A. Smith, a celebrated musical composer, to whose music many of the poet's best songs were wedded. Thus arrayed, they are well-known and valued wherever Scottish song is appreciated—for their elevation and tenderness of sentiment, richness of rural imagery, simplicity, and naturalness of diction. His fame as a lyric poet is well deserved, for the lyre of Scotland, in his hand, retained its native, artless, sweet, and touching notes, and the hills and valleys of Scotland recognised and welcomed the Doric strain.

Among the poets belonging to this period, or in proximity to it, may be mentioned Alexander Ross, born 1699, died 1784, author of "The Fortunate Shepherdess," and several Scottish songs, among others, "The Rock and the wee pickle Tow," or "The Spinning o't," and "The Bridal o't." Alexander Geddes, LL.D., born 1737, died 1802; author of the well-known piece "The Wee Wifiekie," "Lewis Gordon," and many others. James Tytler, born 1747, died 1805; author of "Locherroch Side," "Lass gin ye lo'e me," "The Bonnie Brucket Lassie." Dr Austin, born 17—, died 1774, an accomplished physician at Edinburgh, whose love experiences caused him to indite the piece "For lack of gold she has left me, O." Dr Blacklock, born 1721, died 1791, the blind poet and divine, author of a volume of poems which appeared in 1746, reprinted with additions in 1754 and 1756. He was one of the earliest to perceive the genius of Burns. Sir John Clerk, of Pennycuick, born 1680, died 1755, the writer of the well-known song, "The Miller." William Dudgeon, born 17—,

died 1813; Sir Gilbert Elliot, born 1722, died 1777; Lieut.-General Sir Harry Erskine, born 17—, died 1765: Hon. Andrew Erskine, died 1793; David Macbeth Moir, born 1798, died 1851; long a personal friend of the founder of the well-known firm of William Blackwood & Sons, and a valued contributor to their well-known Magazine, which they have issued for nearly a century. Moir's contributions, particularly his poetic ones, were under the *nom-de-plume*, *Delta*, by which he was known in the literary world. His friend and biographer, Thomas Aird, says "that the popularity of *Delta's* soft and beautiful pieces was very great, especially among the young, and helped well to fix 'Blackwood' on the hearts of the rising generation." Some of Moir's pieces are marked by great tenderness, and are very touching and sincere. His well-known pieces "Casa Wappy," and "Casa's Dirge," particularly the former, are generally referred to in proof of the statement. Aird says of it that its simple, sobbing, wailing pathos has drawn more tears from mothers than any other dirge of our day. It has been well said tears are the truest of critics. Lady Ann Lindsay, born 1750, died 1825, was authoress of the world-renowned ballad, "Auld Robin Gray." Rev. John Logan, born 1748, died 1788, author of "The Braes of Yarrow," "The Light of the Moon," "The Dying Christian," "The Reign of Messiah," and many other beautiful pieces, was the friend and classmate of Michael Bruce. Richard Hewit, born 17—, died, 1794; John Lowe, born 1750, died 1798; Dr James Muirhead, born 1742, died 1806; Isabel Pagan, born 17—, died 1821; usually designated Tibbie Pagan, authoress of the well-known piece, "Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes,"—a song which enchanted Burns, though he was ignorant of its origin. In his notes to Johnston's Museum, he says—

"This song is in the true Scottish taste, yet I do not know either air or words were ever in print before. It has a border sound; and in the line,

'I'se gang wi' you, my shepherd lad,'

is Annandale or Eskdale, and, I believe, good Yarrow." Michael Bruce, born 1746, died, 1767; author of the well-known poem "Loch Leven," the "Elegy to Spring," the justly famed "Ode to the Cuckoo," which Edmund Burke has characterised as "the most beautiful lyric in the language." John Wilson, born 1785, died 1854, a voluminous author, the well-known Christopher North, the prince of critiques since the days of Jeffrey —the author of "Noctes Ambrosianæ," "The Isle of Palms," "The City of the Plague," The Convict," and a very host of other poems, all marked by great descriptive power, graceful and delicate fancy, impressive grandeur, and heart-subduing pathos, the central luminary of that brilliant constellation which illumined the pages of "Maga" for the first half of the present century. Lastly, Adam Skirving, born 1719, died 1803, author of that universally popular song, "Johnnie Cope," and that named "Tranent Muir." These, with many others, have secured by their poetic productions a lasting and honourable place in the literature of their country.

Still later came Thomas Aird, born 1802, died 1876, the friend of Wilson, Moir, and other literary men of that day, by whom he was held in the highest esteem. In 1848 his poems appeared in a collected form, and by 1863 had reached a fourth edition. The volume contains many beautiful pieces, among which may be named "The River," "The Holy Cottage," "The Swallow," "Frank Sylvan," and "My Mother's Grave," the latter breathing a spirit of great tender-

ness, loving devotion, and intensest pathos. Dr Horatius Bonar, born 1808, died 1889, a voluminous and highly popular writer of religious works, and author of many beautiful hymns and lyrics, such as "No More Sea," "The Meeting Place," "A Little While," "Heaven," "The Martyrs of Scotland," "Newly Fallen Asleep," "Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face," "I was a Wandering Sheep." John S. Blackie, born 1809—one of whom every Scotsman may be justly proud—the genial author of "Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece," Lyrical Poems," "Homer and the Iliad," "Songs of the Highlands and Islands," and many other poems and lyrics of great beauty and expressiveness, among which may be named "Beautiful World," and "The Death of Columba." William Miller, born 1810, died 1872; Dr Norman Macleod, born 1812, died 1872; James Hedderwick, born 1814; Charles Mackay, born 1814, died 1891, a charmingly fresh and melodious singer, author of many pieces which hold no mean place in the temple of fame reared by the tuneful brotherhood, among which may be named "Far, Far upon the Sea,' "The Child and the Mourners," "I Lay in Sorrow Deep Distressed," "I Love my Love," "Piety," "The Lost Day," and "The Death-Song of the Poet." John Campbell Shairp, LL.D., Principal of the United College of St Salvador and St Leonard, St Andrews, born 1819, died 18—, author of a volume issued in 1864, entitled "Kilmahoe," a Highland Pastoral with other poems. He also wrote many other pieces, as well as some beautiful lyrics, among which may be named "From the Highlands," "From the Borders," "From the Lowlands," "The Moor of Rannoch," and "The Bush aboon Traquair," the two latter being greatly admired. James Smith, born 1824, author of "Wee Cockielorum," "Wee Jouky-

daidles," "Clap, Clap Handies," and many other tender and touching poems in the Scottish dialect. Dr George Macdonald, born 1824, one of the most popular of living Scottish poets and novelists. Some of his poetic works, as "The Gospel Woman," "The Disciple," and the "Organ Songs" will long maintain the high position they have attained. Scattered through his numerous works will be found many exquisite lyrics. Alexander Smith, born 1830, died 1867, the well-known author of "A Life Drama," "City Poems," and other poems. Isa Craig Knox, born 1831. These, with many others that might be named in the great company of our Scottish masters of song, take an honourable place and name, having added fresh laurels to their country's garland of song, thus keeping awake and increasing a thoughtful admiration for what they and their predecessors have bequeathed to us in their matchless music of English words.

Had space permitted this essay would have included notices of such poets as Allan Cunningham, Robert Allan, Sir Alexander Boswell, Alexander Wilson, Richard Gall and a goodly array of their contemporaries.

These sketchy references to our song-writers of the earlier portion of this century would be sadly defective without a reference to Thomas Campbell, (born 1777, died 1844), author of "The Pleasures of Hope" (pronounced by Byron "one of the most beautiful didactic poems in our language.") "Gertrude of Wyoming," and other highly popular pieces (including his lyrics) are marked by great purity of diction, pathos, and imaginative power. Among his most popular songs may be named, "Hohenlinden," "The Battle of the Baltic," "O'Conner's Child," "The

Soldier's Dream," "The Last Man," "The Exile of Erin," "Glenara," and "The Dirge of Wallace."

With Campbell this sketch of Scottish Poets and Poetry must close, our limits being fully exhausted. Were we to embrace those of the past half century, this essay would require the entire volume of which it but forms the introduction. To those of our readers who desire to acquaint themselves more fully with the subject, we refer them to such works as Irvine's "History of Scottish Poetry," Wilson's "Poets and Poetry of Scotland," Whitelaw's "Books of Scottish Song," Rogers' "Scottish Minstrel," and Edwards' "Modern Scottish Poets."

In glancing over the lists of song writers scattered throughout the pages of this essay, it will be found that while to the educated, and even to the noble of the land, we are indebted for a few of our best effusions, yet the greater portion have emanated from the people themselves—the peasants and artisans of humble life.

Of the ballad and lyrical or musical poems of Scotland, the secular largely preponderate, the epic and dramatic being considered inferior to that of the sister country.

However it may be accounted for, there has long existed in the hearts of Scotsmen, irrespective of great differences, social and educational, a true love for literature in general and poetry in particular, amounting, it may be, to a passion. They have been and are a song-loving people. They love both the words and the airs or music to which these are set. The very air of the country was formerly redolent with the voice of song. Those who have made the subject their special study have drawn a marked distinction between the countries on either side of the Tweed, giving the palm to the northern.

Honours have been freely accorded to Scotland, both for her lyric literature and music which have been withheld from the sister kingdom. "The Land o' Cakes," "of brown heath and shaggy wood," claims hundreds of these beautiful compositions, many of which are of such high excellence as to have given her song-music and poetry a reputation co-extensive with the civilized world. On all hands it is freely admitted that her sources of song have been in the past uniquely fertile.

It may be premised that the contrast between our earlier minor sons of song, as compared with writers of the same class south of the border, is considered to be very marked.

The special development of the national mind, through the new and widely embraced faith which marked the era of the Reformation was largely confined to the more educated classes, learning being then at a very low ebb. Invention, culture, and advancement had not been born. Life was narrow and sordid. The son followed in his father's footsteps. There was nothing to excite interest and create ambition. Now there had come a great change, an awakening which, in process of time, was destined to revolutionize all this. The ideas which had swayed the popular mind—the rubbish of centuries—was to be cleared away. The impetus imparted to the truth, that "the greatest thing on earth is man, and the greatest thing in man is mind," developed the farther truth of man's personal responsibility and individual immediate relation to the Supreme Being, by the doctrines then vigorously promulgated, superadded to those great influences, both literary and spiritual, which were the necessary sequence of the translation, printing, and circulation and consequent opening of the treasures of the

Sacred Scriptures to the newly awakened heart and conscience, must have been very great.

It roused the national mind so effectually from its long slumber that it has never again relapsed into that torpor in which it had lain for centuries. But the new life necessarily took time to develop, for national progress is often of very slow growth; still, it was sufficiently marked to impress itself indelibly on the mental development of the nation—its literature and poetry.

The clear logical tenets of Scottish systematic Theology acted, doubtless, as a whetstone to the intellect, and helped to develop a serious and thoughtful, a reading and an argumentative people. Thus the religious element in Scotland has been a powerful factor in shaping the character of the people, their institutions, and literature. The conflict of the "Covenant" forms the great epic in Scottish history. Likewise the superior parochial education which was established in Scotland very soon after the Reformation, and which she has ever since enjoyed, whereby facilities were afforded for a course of educational training to the children of the peasant and the artisan, coupled with the very moderate cost of study at our Universities, laid the foundations of that self-reliance, self-respect, and independence of thought and action, and that love for literature generally which is universally allowed to be the heritage of her sons in whatever part of the globe their lot may be cast. This has manifested itself in a great variety of ways for centuries—a love for, and a pride in our national poetry being one of its essential characteristics.

Scotland is proverbially prolific in the number of her peasant minor poets. It may be that the traditions and associations of the heroic past, and our early *struggles* for national independence, impressed them-

elves so indelibly on the national mind, as to cast a halo ound our historic battlefields; and that those of our ountrymen on whom descended the poetic mantle, artly caught their inspiration from those great istoric events, and the no less historic names ssociated with them.

The beauty and variety of our scenery must have heir own inspiring effect on poetic temperaments— ofty mountains, now bare in storm-rift brows and ides: now wild in scattered confusion of rocks riven rom their ancient beds, and in the chasms of convul- ive nature: now encircled with the grave grand eauty of kingly forests, or robed in the purple and old of queenly flowers: now capped with misty cloud r glitte ing snow; rugged hills and shaggy woods— hose in the distance gracefully melting into the sky; uiet glens and brawling burns; climbing paths and inding glades; fertile valleys and verdant plains; ar extending, deeply-bosomed lakes, with richly ooded and green-robed islets (their whispering eaves rustling in the breeze), encircled mid their aters; roaring cataracts, gushing torrents, and lesser aterfalls pouring their burden into deep chasms; wift running rivers, murmuring streams, and wimpling urns flowing lakeward or seaward through richly ooded scenery, bearing on their banks emnants of such historic heritages as chapels and hrines, ruins of ancient abbeys and crumbling astles, dismantled keeps, and dilapidated owers rich in legendary lore; towering cliffs nd bold promontories, with cloud swept crest and eeping cliff, keeping watch o'er rock-bound shores; he mystic glory of the ever changing hues and olourings of rising and setting suns, capping the tree ops with coronal and oriflamme, and making a golden lory of piled up and ever-varying clouds; the

multitudinous sea trembling and flashing as with the light of all precious stones dancing on it, grand or gracious with the terror and beauty of storm and calm, with its familiar ebb and flow, imparting its own weird charm to the surrounding landscape; rugged coasts and island studded seas reflecting the rays of the radiant morn, noon wrapped in rainbow shadows, or twilight stealing o'er the realm of night; pebbled beach or silvered strand; while landward are lordly mansions embowered mid well-wooded parks and preserves; ancestral halls of lesser pretensions, full of weird legends; the yeoman's homestead and surrounding lands; the humbler cottages of the rural population; with the fairy knowes and their legendary lore —all this, beautified and enriched by the voices of song birds, and the sweetness of our numerous wild flowers, have so presented themselves in boundless variety to the poetic vision of lovers of home, kindred, and country, as to form in their minds little short of an ideal realm of romance, and have incited and inspired Scotland's imaginative and sympathetic sons with those emotional sentiments which are the heritage of poets, and find their natural outcome in measured and harmonious lines. Here poetry gathers her flowers, and wreathes her laurels.

The clothing of nature is indeed ornate with beauty. The colouring of grass and herbs, the tints of flowers, the loveliness of birds, and the symmetry and gracefulness of animals have never yet been fully and perfectly portrayed. While the fleecy, feathery cirri, floating so gracefully overhead, broken here and there by the deeply tinged azure blue, and the radiance of graduated colouring on sea and earth and sky in many scenes and moods, have not yet been truly and fully delineated either by painter or poet. If we ask the most gifted limner for his own estimate

of his most successful attempts to give nature true form and expression, he will readily acknowledge, that, while his work may glow with life after its own sort, yet it is, at best, but an approximation towards his own ideal; for his thoughts and aspirations are more subtle, more delicate and complex than language or other vehicle of thought can portray. Human genius, either in artist or poet, cannot delineate Nature to perfection, in as much as Nature transcends Art.

Nature, in her infinite variety, touches the soul as nothing else can. Youth, in all its susceptibilities, often gazes on the running brook and the murmuring stream, mid its surroundings of hill and dale; anon, on the majestic mountain, with its mantle of mist, or on the fathomless gorge, until tears fill the eyes. To some this may be but a dream, to others it is a reality, while to both it may and often does constitute the very essence of romance.

Our native land has been so long vocal with the sweet sounds of poetry echoing from river, stream, and lake, mountain, slope, and summit, pastoral valley, and meadow, as to suggest the thought that the Great Designer of all this beauty is He who endowed man with those finer chords of his being which vibrate in subtle sympathy with nature's touch, producing that harmony between the soul and its Creator, which has been the inspiration of the poet's noblest themes, and sublimest aspirations in each successive age—thus poetry has been called "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge."

Music of this class is speech in its most fascinating form. It is the natural language of the soul in its loftiest moods. It is that faculty with which our Creator has endowed us, whereby we are helped and encouraged to cultivate these higher aspects of love and devotion man longs so much to attain. It is the

expression alike of our highest joy—for joy sings; or of our deepest sorrow, which it often soothes; for even sorrow utters its own sad and plaintive wail in tones and accents solemn and revered. When the sense and the sound, the words and the music, fully harmonize, then come the most beautiful and lofty utterances of which man is capable, for then the soul is in its best estate—its sublimest disposition.

As the true artist not only loves his art, but instinctively cultivates it for the pleasure he experiences, so the true poet is led by similar impulses, and feels a thrill of emotion when his lines flow smoothly and clearly. In the spring time of life there is additional joy and beauty in all this, for then it is that the throb of pleasure and thrill of delight are most deeply felt, and the fire of life burns most brightly; and poetry—natural, simple, unaffected, and true to Nature and Man, united with an artistic sense of what is beautiful and pathetic in human life—finds permanent lodgment in the soul, producing its own sweet sway over the mind, and yielding healthful nourishment from youth to manhood, even to old age.

It is well to remember that while each lyric is the conception of its author, and brought to the birth by him, yet our heritage of song is more than merely cumulative, for its growth is vital, and therefore composed of historically dependent members, who could never have sung so well had they not been preceded by others of the craft—soul after soul, with love-light in their eyes, sending forth their longings in the sweet music of set speech and song, echoed and re-echoed across the intervening centuries, even to our own day, by responding and sympathetic hearts.

The youthful poetic soul is peculiarly susceptible of this spell, for it is then a passion, an intense glow, a tumultuous rush of feeling, and generally retains its

hold through life—cares and duties, mayhap, keeping it merely in abeyance, but when these are surmounted, the youthful poetic ardour regains to some extent its hold, and retains undisputed sway. In youth, and during the full vigour of manhood, we are more generally animated with a strong desire to cultivate the art, and excel in it, than in declining years; and this desire seems to be implanted in more human breasts than is generally supposed. In youth the voice of nature is as sweet music; fresh and graceful odours ascend from the green or russet forest, from flowers of every hue, from every tree and shrub, plant and leaf, and from every songster of the grove; but this is tempered and softened as life advances, for then the quiet and mellowed light of sunset is thickly gathering around And it is well that it is so, for the highest experiences of the soul are often so perplexing and mixed as to seem set round with prickly thorns—like the rose on its stem.

No one, however, can be thus animated unless there be, in some degree, the instinctive poetic temperament whereby the entire faculties are kindled, so as to impart precious sight to the eye, and thought to the mind. Doubtless, like that of its twin sister, the faculty is capable of indefinite improvement, and is developed largely by cultivation; but the heart and the harp must be somewhat in unison ere musical strains and measured lines can flow harmoniously in the living waters of song.

The true purpose of every earnest student should be to acquire that discrimination which will enable him to distinguish between the intellectual endowments of different minds, and so feed upon, and assimilate all that genius has set before him—no matter how diversified it may be. Mental, like bodily food, is various, and the function of health is to assimilate to itself the variety proffered.

The block of marble as it comes from the quarry is but a shapeless mass; but when placed under the hands of the sculptor, it is transformed into "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." The chaste and classic piece of statuary was not found in the marble; it was formed out of it by the genius of the sculptor, as a master in his art. The miner finds the rough diamond, but the art of the lapidary shapes it into a sparkling gem of rarest beauty. So is it with the human soul. In its rough, natural, untutored state — uneducated, undisciplined — it follows the lowest instincts of the animal; placed under the benign influences of education in its higher aspects, the plebeian may, and often does become the philosopher, the philanthropist, or the hero.

All through the present century numerous collections of the works of Scottish Poets have appeared, among which may be noted "The Pocket Encyclopædia of Songs," in two volumes, printed at the University press of Glasgow, and published in 1816. "The Harp of Renfrewshire," a work containing many original songs, and preceded by "Essay on the Poets of Renfrewshire," by W. Motherwell, then quite a young man, published at Paisley in 1819; "Harp of Caledonia"—a more comprehensive collection, in three volumes, published in 1821. Four years later Allan Cunningham issued at London "The Songs of Scotland," in four volumes. In 1829 the Messrs Chambers of Edinburgh published their edition of "The Songs of Scotland," in two volumes, under the editorship of their senior partner, with an introductory historical essay from his pen on Scottish songs. In 1835 appeared, in two volumes, the "Songs of England and Scotland," by Peter Cunningham. *About 1850* was issued, in one volume, "The Book *of Scottish Song*," edited by Whitelaw, and pub-

lished by Blackie & Son, Glasgow, while fully twenty years thereafter that firm issued in two handsome volumes—"The Poets and Poetry of Scotland," with biographical notices by James Grant Wilson. During 1842 there appeared, in two volumes, a collection of modern songs by writers then living, entitled "Whistle-Binkie"—a work which has been highly popular, and has gone through several editions. These, with many others on the same subject, have been much appreciated.

Scottish song of the last fifty years has been characterised—among other distinguishing features—by high moral tone, in affinity with refined delineation of nature—the wedding of the material and the spiritual, lifting the soul as by a necessary gracious transition from the lower to the higher. This may be taken alike as a pledge and prophecy of progress in popular taste and culture, of which there is need in presence of certain questionable literature in the prose and poetry of our day;—auguring well for the future when those now young shall have assumed the responsibilities of life.

By Lyric and Idyllic, rather than Dramatic Form, even such masters as Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne, have been more successful in touching the popular spirit.

Other nations have virility and wit, some more, some less; but in the Scottish soul there are both force and fun, which cannot be generated in any other soil, and which defies successful imitation. Certain enthusiasts go the length of saying there is no wit but Scotch wit,—this notwithstanding the cynical sarcasm of Sydney Smith and his surgical operation. It is presumed no one will deny that there is a rich abounding power and sense of humour in the Scottish mind, and ever since it was so far cultivated

as to express itself in this manner, poetically it has attained power and realism, and has been largely developed.

We may say without immodesty or egotism, there is no wit in the world like it. Of this humour—the unique flavour of Scottish salt—the songs of our native land of the last half century are excellent representatives and interpreters. It is unnecessary to add these songs breathe and burn with the fire of patriotism.

Their beauty, power, and charm consist in their truthfulness and simplicity. They touch, with rare felicity, the elements and instincts of that higher human nature which lies beyond the accidents of time and place. Every phase of social and intellectual life is faithfully reflected in them; not a few give pictures of an ideal world—one purer and higher in thought and action than the present. And why should they not? for the best of our race are ever aiming to attain a higher moral use of these twin arts. This would elevate what is greatest and highest among men, and help them to attain unto a truer sense of that pure code given for the rule of life. A fierce light now shines on the pages of modern poetry, to reveal the least deviation from the high standard which has been reared, and now jealously guarded.

There is true philosophy in the saying which Mackenzie (author of the "Man of Feeling") causes old Ben Silton to repeat:—"There is at least one advantage in the poetical inclination, that it is an incentive to philosophy. There is a certain poetic ground on which a man cannot tread without feeling an enlargement of heart. The causes of human depravity vanish before the romantic enthusiasm he professes; and many who are not able to reach the

Parnassian heights may yet approach so near as to be bettered by the air of the climate." Wordsworth hoped that his poems might in some measure "console the afflicted, add sunshine to the daylight, by making the happy happier, teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore become more actively and securely virtuous."

All along the fertile banks of the living stream of Scottish Song, there is an appeal to the heart, for it faithfully mirrors those simple and natural feelings which are common to the race—feelings that draw all classes within one circle, and towards a common centre. It has so stirred the heart of the nation as to become a vital force, passing through the blood of the great mass of the people.

To read and study the works of our best Scottish poets is to appreciate them; to be touched by them is to be brought under their spell. When under the poetic inspiration, their hearts were warm, their imagination vivid—thus their wealth of language and their beauty of imagery, and the might and majesty of their finer thoughts, impart fresh charms to what so e'er it touched, and where so e'er it came. To the sincere lovers of poetry the continued stream of Scottish song is a true *pactolus*.

This is emphatically a reading age beyond all others that have preceded it. The religious and mental awakening, and subsequent developments which Scotland experienced during the era of the Reformation, and the vast increase in the energy and activity of the nation resulting therefrom, have gone on ever increasing in strength. But it is only within the present century that, by a fortunate concurrence of events, literature has become so abundantly accessible, as to place the highest National classics within the reach of all. Thus reading has become a main factor in popular instruction and entertainment, and

has largely taken the place of and partly superseded oral teaching.

Poetry as a branch of literature is assuredly cosmopolitan in its character, and must be the exponent of a genuine national expression of a distinctively national cast of thought. Scottish poets exhibit in their productions a natural independence and distinctiveness of utterance. Here we are in the open air, and in the sunshine of our national life. Here the human faculties have full play, and the beauty and joy of national life are seen. Though there be an occasional sameness of conception and execution in their themes and subjects, they exhibit the distinctive characteristics of the Scottish mind—a warm love for the beauties of Nature, an earnest desire to unfold new truths derived therefrom, faithful delineations of life and manners, a noble stand on behalf of freedom of thought in its most comprehensive sense, and a sturdy manliness and independence in fighting life's battle, and the due performance of duty:—thus will the vision be cleared, and the life ennobled. This, with the faithful maintenance of a high moral code, we accept as a healthy condition of national life, and constitutes a rich inheritance for the future.

The writer has been led in a measure to pursue this train of thought by his study of the subject, and by his acquaintance with Mr D. H. Edwards' series of fifteen volumes of "Modern Scottish Poets" at home and abroad published during the past sixteen years. Mr Edwards entered on his self-imposed, but congenial task in the full flush of healthful vigour, but without realising the ultimate importance and extent of the undertaking. What he supposed would occupy his spare time from editorial and other duties for twelve months, com*pressed into* one unpretentious volume, has expanded

into a labour of upwards of sixteen years. He undertook the preparation of a volume of selections, with accompanying short biographical sketches, under the belief that one such volume would exhaust available material; but he soon discovered that he had greatly underestimated the width and wealth of the subject. Even when engaged on his second issue, he concluded that, with the publication of a third, his labours would terminate. To his great surprise, however, each volume became the mother of its successor, and even now, after the publication of his fifteenth series, he is conscious that there lies, partly hidden, it may be, in numerous instances, many golden sheaves ungarnered, which would yield additional lustre to this collection of "Modern Scottish Poets."

Mr Edwards has shown himself possessed of the poetic insight, the deep searching analytic power which has enabled him to perform his difficult and laborious task successfully. Earnest appeals were made by letter and through friends all these years to secure a niche in "this temple of fame" for those whose productions unfortunately showed they were unworthy the honour. Thus were his sympathies often vigorously attacked, but by the strength of his innate perceptions, he was generally able to resist those importunities. This brought its own reward. Mr Edwards, however, did often sympathise most tenderly with aspirants—guiding and encouraging their efforts in thought and expression. To one undertaking such a task, deep and penetrating insight seems indispensible.

All Scotchmen who are lovers of poetry—and their name is legion—owe Mr Edwards a lasting debt of gratitude for his series of "Modern Scottish Poets." He has furnished his countrymen, those fifteen years, with an annual volume. These in the aggregate contain *specimens* of the poetic productions of

upwards of twelve hundred poets, accompanied by interesting biographical sketches and critical notices of each contributor. These are marked by brevity and perspicacity, and give a sound critical estimate of each. The whole series has been read by thousands in all classes of society. Each year brought its welcome volume, with its interesting personal reminiscences, and well selected pieces, enriching our leisure hours, and making us happy. He has introduced us to kindly and pleasant companions who invite us as their guests, and entertain us with their choicest viands of thought and speech, whereby healthy and invigorating thought has been nourished, generous, frank, manly love cherished, and harmless laughter indulged.

Who can estimate the number of happy hours experienced by many when leisurely reviewing the "march-past" of men and women of all ranks and classes, types and characters, which defile before us in the series. Each volume contains not a few flashes from the anvil of some delightful genius:—gems—shall I say, if not of the first water, at least clear from the fountain, causing the eye to sparkle, the cheek to blush—gems which stir the blood, fire the imagination, so stirring the soul as to rouse it to its highest pitch of enthusiasm. And so long as Scotland's sons and daughters are thus animated, she will retain her ancient spirit, and the star of her glory will sparkle as of yore.

The most precious gems in poetic literature are those truly national pieces which have become, by general consent and approval, as rare flowers which are carried from mind to mind, like precious seeds of perennial growth. These show the highest efforts of which the human mind is capable, in its endeavours after higher attainments, and in its search after new *forms of thought*, embodied in graceful language,

which have been so far successful as to have touched the heart strings of humanity, and made the reading world of one kindred and people.

Volumes which so influence and inspire their readers are well entitled to, and will ultimately obtain their merited reward. We venture to say the more Mr Edwards' series is studied, the more will they find audience in the hearts of their sympathetic readers. They contain many pieces which may be regarded as national, having been universally adopted as expressing national desires, hopes, and aspirations. And amid the minstrelsy of the choir, which has made the name of Scotland and her peasantry familiar throughout the inhabited globe, the varied notes from the songs and poetry contained in Edwards' series of Modern Scottish Poets will ever be heard. Thus do they contain a noble anthology, unique in our literature.

His arduous labours, extending over so many years, have brought him into contact with nearly all classes in the social scale, some of whom are among his valued contributors. With the greater number he has had pleasant intercourse, and many friendships thus formed he regards among the most pleasing, as they will be the most lasting, associations of his life. The exceptions are few; and in referring reluctantly to these in the course of our communications with him, he good humouredly hinted that some of the would-be contributors had but little of the poetic element in their composition. The class designated "the *genus irritabile*" was now and again difficult to deal with. The editor of this series, like the publisher and editor of the old "Whistle-Binkie," had to be decided in his opinions. Still he did so with all the delicacy at his command, remembering that they ardently desired to utter gracefully and poetically the thoughts that arose in them—but could not.

The present series—which this volume completes—is at once an illustration and a proof that the national love for poetry exhibits no signs either of decay or senility. The "vision and faculty divine" is neither stunted in its growth, nor meagre in development. It is still a living force in the Scottish soul. And with the present growth of education and mental culture, there will doubtless be many fresh devotees and worshippers at the shrine of the muses.

The beautiful and expressive old Scottish Doric, as a medium for versification, will doubtless become less general; but it is earnestly hoped that it will not fall out of use, nor wholly disappear, very many of its words being especially rich in their expressiveness and beauty, and redolent of all forms of rural scenes and pastoral life, like beautiful bits of moss besprent with dew, and tufted with blossom. Whatever be its fate, it can be safely affirmed that only the cream of poetry, in either dialect, will survive, or reach the distinction of being linked to music.

It may be considered that many of the pieces in the series are, to some extent, imitations of those which have gained a niche in the temple of fame: but they are not thereby wholly deprived of originality of conception and treatment. The editor does not claim great merit, or even a modicum, for many of these, but he trusts it will be generally allowed that there is a visible honesty of purpose in treating themes as they really are—not as they may appear to an over-sanguine temperament, and an over-heated imagination. In the former, writers are under the control of reason, while often in the latter they revolt from her sway.

The editor's aim throughout the entire work has been to select a variety of pieces where the poetic expression is not only appropriate and graceful, but partakes mainly of those moral

qualities where manliness, patriotism, nobility, heroism, and love for home, country, and kindred are brought into play, while under the dictates of enlightened reason and the experiences of daily life. Of all these, it is hoped, the series will be found to contain many gems, some striking chords of such tenderness as often to blind the eyes with tears. It should always be borne in mind that the tendency of our best poetry is to strengthen those higher sentiments which charm and elevate the mind of man.

As the more precious stones differ greatly in quantity and quality, and form the choicest jewels in royal diadems, so the songs of Scotland are believed to be the most precious gems in her literary crown. The well-known author of "The Temple" says—"A verse may reach him whom a sermon flies." And as the most precious stones are comparatively rare, and are thus all the more prized, so is it with the purest and most highly finished of our literary gems—which are in fact priceless treasures.

But while many other precious stones are of lesser value, yet they are diligently sought for, and on them the lapidary and jeweller exert their skill. So, while the most precious poetic gems are believed to be comparatively rare, still there are many of minor value, abundant in quantity, varied in quality—gems of their own order, essential to our intellectual well-being, containing inspired thoughts couched in choicest language, and breathing the higher forms of emotional and intellectual life. The sentiments they breathe, and the emotional and moral atmosphere by which they are surrounded help to elevate and purify their votaries.

The subjects chiefly delineated in this series of the song-writers of Scotland embrace a wide range. There are the maximum, as well as the minimum

—the greater and lesser pieces. Almost every phase of spiritual, intellectual, social, rural, and domestic life of the nineteenth century is portrayed in these volumes. Many of the pieces show that the respective writers possess considerable power over pure and simple diction, in unison with smooth and flowing rhythm; while others exhibit force and originality of conception, and mirror the poet's modes of thought, and his estimate of life with its responsibilities and obligations.

There is likewise exhibited an energy of passion, which, under the pressure of circumstances, internal and external, shows itself in many of the pieces. Some describe Nature for their love of her. Others identify her with the human heart more closely than he who, either from inferior imaginative power, or a want of appreciation, does not feel the inherent vitality in things. Some, again, study man as the highest manifestation of Nature and Creation. Many of the pieces are of that class which men do not willingly let die.

There are also pieces possessing charms for the sensibilities of youth, when the heart is full and soft, tender and more easily impressed than those of more mature years. Every lover of the muses will remember with what delight he perused and re-perused certain pieces which, in childhood and youth, captivated the imagination, and in the afterhood of life yielded pleasure in the retrospect. Many of them will recall youthful emotions, which thrilled the bosom of the village maiden and her youthful swain, when "pleased with the present, they were full of glorious hope."

Again, there are pieces, sacred in their mission, which fall alike on palace and hut—perennial—"most moving, delicate, and full of life"—descriptive of the occurrences of every-day life—home, sweet home, so *dear to the* heart of every right thinking person, with

all its early remembrances and associations through life and in death, encircled with the finer susceptibilities and human affections of father, mother, sister, brother; delineations of human life, in its ever varying, changeful aspects—youth and its loves, manhood with its aspirations, middle life with its cares, declining years with its hopes and noble desires; reminiscences of early years—children in their prattle and youthful vigour, giving fair promise for the life that now is, unexpectedly laid low by disease, and mowed down by the "sickle keen;" manhood snatched when in full vigour, the mourners going about the streets; old age ripened into fruit, and borne away as a "shock of corn fully ripe."

Then there are pieces descriptive of nature and natural objects — the sun, moon, and stars set in the vault of heaven; the inconstant, yet constant seasons; trees, shrubs, and flowers, bare and leafless in winter, budding into life and leaf with advancing spring, anon clad in all the fulness of summer foliage, bearing blossom and fruit in autumn, then passing into the "sere and yellow leaf."

Yet, again, there are pieces, marvels of delicacy and power, descriptive of youth's little life of love in its earlier phases, and in its more steady growth, maturing, consolidating—not a few so touch the heart as to draw out its entire sympathies and feelings until they become satiated. This is the touch "that makes the whole world akin."

And there will be found scattered through the series pieces descriptive of Nature as she really is, with a singular force of realization of natural scenery, each having its own voice, one from the mountains, one from deep ravines, one from roaring cataracts, and one from the sea; these speak to us of the silent majesty of our greater mountains and lesser hills, of the rapid flow of our larger rivers, and

the more gentle motion of lesser streams: of far-reaching straths and lonely moors: of cultivated fields, plains, and valleys—all so full of stirring and endearing associations, past and present.

Thus the range of subjects is comprehensive and their treatment diversified. The editor fondly cherishes the hope that many of his numerous selections will be found to contain power, originality, deep insight into the springs of human thought, and vivid representation of objective and subjective realities that hold the reading world by a charm—special characteristics of our national poets. He indulges the hope that a great many of the pieces will ultimately be found to bear the indelible stamp of immortality.

He may further be allowed to say, that the fact—for which there is substantial ground—that in these years, these annual volumes have been diligently perused by the rising generation, the poetry in them having caught the ear, and touched the heart of youth (thereby influencing them for good in awakening latent talent, and encouraging laudable ambition), has been to the Editor a gratification, encouragement, and stimulus—an impetus and inspiration toward the time when a love of literature for its own sake will supplant lower pleasures, and usher in the era when higher and purer forms of intellectual culture shall engage man's thoughts and absorb his attention.

He who rises by the persistent cultivation of the powers with which he is endowed, and whose aim is to use these for the elevation of the race, and the consequent good of mankind, becomes a benefactor of his species, and attains to a high position among his fellows: for, after all, mind is the true measure and standard of man. It is in the ratio of our influence for good, by word and deed among our fellows, that we become truly noble. It must be borne in mind *that the* measure of a well spent life lies less in

length of years than in noble acts and deeds; they are man's greatest powers of kindness and love. What else can truly dignify humanity?

He who writes with a consciousness that he possesses in some degree the power to produce something new and true for the use, or it may be the pleasure of his fellows—true to humanity, and to nature—has not lived in vain: and he who possesses the ability to touch the heart, and influence human life by the power of his prose, the rhythm of his poetry, or the pathos of his songs, is richly endowed, and for the manner of its use he is responsible. In forming an estimate of poetry, we should bear in mind that it contains the cream of a peoples thought.

Authors of the best type entertain their readers with their highest, best, purest thoughts, couched in their choicest language, and seem only to write when in their highest moods — their aim being moral elevation, simple grandeur, and personal purity of aim. No base metal is permitted, all is as pure gold as its author can present. It is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. revealing what is fair, and bright, and beautiful in feeling, and imagination and thought. Such writings help to wile away many a languid hour, strengthen good resolution, fortify against temptation, lift the mind above its common level, infuse elevated ideas, draw the soul from Nature up to Nature's God, thus imparting lofty desires and aspirations, elevating the moral being, purifying the springs of action, and ennobling our better nature.

The influence exerted by this class of literature is past computation; for our intercourse with those we never saw, through the written page, is often more intimate and close than it is with our dearest friends; hence the necessity of being rigidly severe in our selection of authors. Here the choicest companion-

ship may be attained, and we may obtain what fellowship and rank we desire, no matter how high. By our nobility of association in the kingdom of letters, our own inherent nobility will assuredly be tested. Here we have at command, the fellowship of the best and highest of the Kings and Queens and nobility of literature—the companionship, in our quiet hours, of the good and the great of all generations, assimilating ourselves to them—if we choose—in all that is truly great and good.

There is a beautiful aggressiveness in the poetic spirit. It is vigorous and expanding in its contagion. Where e'er it comes, if the spark exist, it kindles into flame, consuming the dross, and leaving the pure ore. Poetry is thus like the flowing river carrying its fertilizing influences on its bosom.

Poets of this class entertain us with their choicest viands; they admit us to their sanctum, and treat us sumptuously; thus there is mutual contact, and the entertained are permanently benefited and mentally enriched.

The kingdom of letters comprehends all others. It takes cognisance of all human intelligence in the whole circle of its manifestations and activities, and is without limit. In this kingdom are found all the greatest of human kind; here they meet as one common brotherhood. In this realm there is but one country—that of genius, and one feast—that of intellectual culture and expansion. Here mind is the true measure of the man, and the illustrious writers of all nations shake hands as brethren wearing the badge of that fraternity, the literature of which fertilises and enriches human kind. This forms the true aristocracy, and the reader's inherent nobility of spirit will be measured by the depth of his sympathies in this direction. All peoples are *justly proud* of their literature, and every work which

exhibits virility is now welcomed from whatever nationality it emanates. A literary history will always develop into a national history, in which is found the evolutions of a people with all their passions, struggles, defects, and ultimate victories, so that the richest and the most original are they who reflect life the most widely in its infinite variety.

The editor of this series of "Modern Scottish Poets" cherishes the hope that his volumes will be acknowledged to have contributed their quota to this "feast of fat things." He is well aware that the Song Minstrelsy of Scotland, both in grandeur and variety, is acknowledged to bear favourable comparison even to the lyric poets of Greece, so long considered the masters of Lyric muse. This reputation Mr Edwards has endeavoured to maintain. How far he has succeeded is not for him to say. This much, however, he can say, that it has been his aim throughout that nothing find a place in these pages tinged even in the faintest degree with thought and sentiment of a lower level than is portrayed in this essay. He has endeavoured to gather together a representative body of Scottish song, some of which, he trusts, may be considered classical. It has been his constant aim that every piece bear unmistakably the "guinea stamp," if not in a literary, at least in its higher moral bearings. It has been his aim that every true lover of our native minstrelsy will find that in these volumes the Scotch lyre has been fairly represented, alike in the old Doric, and in the more modern strains of present-day writers.

There but remains to the Editor the pleasant task of offering his sincere and grateful thanks to each of his contributors whose original productions grace the pages of his series, and to other authors and their publishers, by whose permission many valued copyright pieces are added, as well as to numerous friends

who have so heartily aided him with material for the character sketches in his picture gallery of poets, and in numerous other ways afforded facilities to him during his sixteen years' labour in the preparation of this, our most extensive anthology of Scottish song.

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do	Kirkland, D.	15 : 190
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do	Orr, John	8 : 327
do	Thomson, J.	1 : 390
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Farming,	Allan R.	9 : 361
do	Delday, W.	12 : 40
do	Eckford, J. C.	14 : 259
do	Farquharson, A.	13 : 278
do	Hume, J.	13 : 151
do	Keith, D.	4 : 192
do	Knox, W.	15 : 164
do	Lawrence, W. M.	10 : 322
do	Mackarsie, W.	14 : 253
do	M'Farlane, S.	6 : 394
do	M'Gill, W. G.	5 : 360

Farming,	M'Kimm, J.	5 : 349
do	Millar, C.	15 : 400
do	Reid, J. D.	15 : 166
do	Shanks, H.	11 : 372
do	Sinclair, W.	7 : 307
do	Sproat, G.	5 : 356
do	Stewart, W.	12 : 89
do	Usher, J.	10 : 276
do	Watson, J.	1 : 42
do	Young, D.	1 : 99
Farm Servant,	Harper, F.	6 : 345
Forester,	Gordon, F. H.	3 : 365
Fruit-grower,	Craig, J.	2 : 121
Gardener,	Dalgity, J.	7 : 208
do	Farquhar, W. A. G.	7 : 275
do	Hardie, J.	15 : 351
do	Howden, R.	2 : 34
do	Murray, A.	9 : 214
do	Murray, W.	12 : 57
do	Neill, W.	5 : 339
do	Pettigrew, J.	5 : 35
do	Robertson, A.	2 : 326
do	Robertson, W.	1 : 306
do	Thomson, J.	3 : 381
do	Wilson, H. C.	1 : 70
Gas Light Co. Servant,	Hamilton, A.	7 : 242
Glass-Cutter,	Reid, J. P.	6 : 241
Government Official,	Skelton. J.	11 : 281
Granite Polisher,	Chalmers, R.	9 : 326
Grocer,	Buchanan, A.	11 : 356
do	Colburn, G.	5 : 65
do	Graham, A. S.	9 : 149
do	Graham, D.	9 : 103
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do	Reston, A.	5 : 63
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do	Sutherland, W.	12 : 167
do	Wilson, S.	13 : 67
Handloom-weaver,	Black, W.	12 : 102
do	Ross, J.	2 : 352
Hatter,	Brown, Simon	7 : 288
H.M. Sasine Officer,	Mackenzie, J. G.	8 : 182
Horse-trainer,	Gordon, A. L.	12 : 232
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do	Forsyth, William	13 : 205

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do	Wallace, A.	2 : 102
Insurance Agent,	Murray, D. S.	9 : 354
do	Inspector, Nicol C.	6 : 70
do	Manager, Gibson, C. P.	9 : 239
do	Official, Martin, J. L.	2 : 333
Iron Moulder,	Russell, T.	1 : 309
Iron Plainer,	Lyall, J. W.	5 : 386
do	Ross, A.	1 : 292
Jeweller,	Jackson, W. V.	7 : 185
do	M'Intosh, W. S.	9 : 69
do	Smith, D. C.	5 : 308
Joiner,	Bruce, G.	1 : 217
do	Burns, D.	14 : 387
do	Ironside, D.	10 : 400
do	M'Kean, H.	14 : 324
do	Morison, J.	9 : 45
do	Soutar, A. M.	1 : 101
do	Wilson, J.	5 : 378
Journalist,	Begg, P.	4 : 210
do	Dakers, R. A.	14 : 144
do	Dykes, T.	5 : 71
do	Glass, A.	6 : 339
do	Graham, W.	5 : 396
do	Hedderwick, J.	3 : 410
do	Kelly, J.	1 : 208
do	Locke, F.	9 : 290
do	Macdonald, H.	7 : 43
do	Macdonald, N.	14 : 268
do	Mackinlay, W. A. B.	12 : 336
do	M'Leod, D.	12 : 292
do	M'Queen, W.	1 : 31
do	Middleton, A. G.	12 : 271
do	Murray, George	13 : 265
do	Rae-Brown, Colin C.	8 : 383
do	Robertson, K.	9 : 345
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Labourer,	Bethune, J.	1 : 94

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do	Taylor, J.	1 : 78
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Land Surveyor,	Durie, W. S.	5 : 291
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do	Dodds, J.	4 : 242
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do	Melville, A. P.	12 : 75
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do	Sturoc, W. C.	4 : 335
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do	Wilkie, J.	6 : 273
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Law Clerk,	Anderson, B. R.	6 : 402
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Leather Merchant,	Fulton, W.	12 : 378
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Letter Carrier,	Milne, J.	2 : 362
do	Snaddon, Alex	8 : 115
do	Thomson, Hugh	8 : 205
Letter Stamper,	Christie, J. K.	1 : 18
Librarian,	Maxwell, George	8 : 399
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do	Stewart, C.	8 : 306
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do	Swan, A. S.	6 : 397
Lodge and store keeper,	Buchanan, D.	6 : 329
Machinist,	Macdonald, C.	14 : 321
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do	(Clerks), Leighton, W.	1 : 294
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do	Kerr, A. M.	5 : 216
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do	Simpson, Alexander Nicol	11 : 307
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Manufacturing Chemist,	Spence, P.	13 : 138
Marine Insurance,	Lawson, J.	11 : 68
Mason,	Cowie, J.	1 : 386
do	Dinnie, R.	13 : 287
Mechanic,	Gardiner, P.	10 : 316
do	M'Intosh, D.	2 : 329
do	Robertson, A.	2 : 155
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do	Braidwood, D. G.	7 : 285
do	Buchan, P.	3 : 421
do	Buist, R. C.	12 : 346
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do	Johnstone, J.	13 : 128

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do	Simpson, Sir J. Y.	13 : 193
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do	Inglis, John	5 : 162
do	Knox, T.	9 : 107
do	M'Corkindale, D.	5 : 160
do	M'Naughton, P.	4 : 369
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do	Scott, Andrew	5 : 136
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do	Wood, J. W.	3 : 342
Merchant and Shipowner,	Whittet, J. P.	11 : 395
Messenger-at-arms,	Dewar, H. A.	10 : 67
Mill Foreman,	Watt, J. E.	1 : 73
Mill Furnisher,	Thomson, R. B.	7 : 154
Mill Overseer,	Westwood, James	8 : 259
Mill Worker,	Sinclair, E. M.	4 : 84
Miller,	Mackay, J.	1 : 334
Milliner,	Macpherson, R. S.	2 : 203
do	Muir, J. K.	2 : 382
do	Paterson, J. G.	15 : 284
Millwright,	Young, D.	15 : 282
Miner,	Ferguson, N.	12 : 355
do	M'Murdo, G.	5 : 221
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Mining Agent,	Beveridge, M. K.	-	12 : 230
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do	Alexander, A. C.	-	5 : 303
do	Alexander, W. L.	-	10 : 222
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do	Anderson, John	-	7 : 329
do	Anderson, R. S. G.	-	11 : 197
do	Andrew, J.	-	4 : 295
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do	Arnold, G. S.	-	14 : 336
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do	Burns, David	-	7 : 365
do	Burns, J. D. -	-	4 : 233
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do	Lawrie, G. J.	10 : 357
do	Lawson, R.	9 : 218
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do	Livingstone, P.	1 : 229
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do	Macgregor, D.	11 : 83
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do	Macleod, John	15 : 425
do	Macleod, N.	1 : 391
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do	Macrae, D.	2 : 188
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do	Matheson, G.	9 : 143
do	M'Cheyne, R. M.	15 : 83
do	M'Lean, A. T.	4 : 72
do	M'Pherson, J.	11 : 105
do	Mearns, P.	14 : 79
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do	Paton, J.	2 : 309
do	Patterson, A. S.	15 : 262
do	Paul, J.	11 : 389
do	Philip, W. M.	8 : 212
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do	Rogers, C.	3 : 370
do	Sanders, R.	4 : 382
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do	Yair, D. W.	7 : 247
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do	Dickie, J.	14 : 234
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Musician,	Acquroff, H.	11 : 276
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do	Allan, D. S.	12 : 68
do	Bogue, J.	15 : 20
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do	Lauder, J.	6 : 363
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Musicseller,	Barr, M.	2 : 200

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Nurse,	Macpherson, M.	15 : 42
Nurseryman,	Laing, Alex.	6 : 148
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Organ Builder,	Gardiner, W.	9 : 250
Packman,	Laing, A.	2 : 273
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do	Brechin, G.	3 : 414
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do	Watson, T.	2 : 220
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Pattern-maker,	Brown, J.	2 : 131
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Photographer,	Hall, W.	8 : 60
Plasterer,	Johnston, J.	3 : 335
Plumber,	Waters, D.	2 : 254
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do	Nichol, J.	2 : 245
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do	Shairp, J. C.	9 : 188
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do	Rae, J.	11 : 399
do	Walker, R.	12 : 320
do	(Private), Taylor, M.	6 : 102
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Servant,	M'Lintock, Agnes C.	13 : 338
Sewing Machine Agent,	Blackburn, J. J.	14 : 62
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Shepherd,	Ferguson, D.	13 : 297
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do	Reid, R.	12 : 98
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do	Cooper, G.	6 : 73
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do	Gordon, A.	9 : 96
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do	Turner, G.	5 : 261
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do	Smith, W. B.	11 : 93
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INGENIOUS LIST OF POPULAR SCOTCH SONGS, ARRANGED AS A TALE.

THE following may interest a number of our readers. It was suggested by and based on a most ingenious letter that was published in the *Scots Magazine* for 1806. No name was appended to the clever compilation, in which no less than 105 titles of Scottish songs were introduced, so as to make a continuous epistle to "Sandy O'er the Lee" :—

In the morning very early, in gloomy December, when the Scotch *reveltie* and the hollow drum and fife from 'Roslin Castle' were heard, I was making ready to follow 'Jocky to the Fair,' and stopped and had some 'Caul' Kail in Aberdeen' with 'Auld Sir Simon the Laird,' 'Sir James the Rose,' 'Logie o' Buchan' and their companions, 'Sir Duncan Brodie,' 'The Yellow-haired Laddie,' 'Tam Glen,' 'The Miller o' Drone,' 'Muirland Willie,' 'The Whistling Ploughman," and 'James Gray,' a 'Caledonian Laddie.' The refreshment, according to custom, was but their morning's piece, and I was hospitably prevailed upon to accompany them 'O'er the Water to Charlie,' to breakfast on 'Caller Herring,' at the 'House Below the Mill,' with the sign of the 'Blue Bells of Scotland,' where a few of the 'Merry Lads of Ayr' had met to make a 'Merry Meeting,' for they had been 'Up in the Morning Early,' following the 'Brave Kenmure' 'A' the way frae Lochaber,' that's 'O'er the Hills an' far awa';' but we'll now come to the bottom of the punch bowl; the landlord was 'Johnny M'Gill,' half-brother to 'John Roy Stewart'; ye ken, Johnny was a piper's son, and married 'Bonnie Christie.'

'The Sutor's Dochter.' She gaed us a hearty welcome; for 'Blythe was she But and Ben;' and 'When she came ben she bobbit,' and introduced us to 'My Joe Janet,' 'Fair Helen,' 'Bonny Barbara Allen,' 'The lovely Lass o' Inverness,' 'Tibby Fowler,' 'The Maid o' the Mill,' 'Lovely young Jessy,' 'Mary Gray,' 'The Flowers o' the Forest,' 'Annie Laurie,' a lass I wad dee for, and my 'Highland Mary,' 'My bonnie wee Thing,' wi' 'The Maid of Isla.' They were all waiting the arrival of 'Lucy Campbell' from 'Within a mile o' Edinburgh Toon,' for it's weel kent she's to be married to 'Young Lochinvar,' the 'Rattling roaring Hieland Man.' The 'Auld Gudeman wi' his wee bit Wifiekie,' made us sit down to 'Cakes and Ale,' and 'Daft Robin' and 'Berwick Johnny' did 'Push about the Jorum;' while 'Link-him Doddie' and 'Gilderoy' were crying 'Gie the lassies mair o't,' up flew the door and in sprang a 'Soger Laddie' 'In the garb o' auld Gaul.' 'I thocht it was Johnny Coming;' but 'Na faith 'tis na that,' says 'Peggy Baun,' for that's 'John Anderson my Joe' frae 'Bonny Dundee,' 'For he would be a Soger.' Most of us knowing the 'Bonny Lad wi' the White Cockade,' we invited him to take a seat by his old comrade, 'Donald o' Dundee,' which he no sooner did than 'Jingling Johnny' took out his pipes and began to play 'We're a' gane to the barn, lassie'—wilt thou gae? but was stopped by 'Duncan,' who begged he would favour the company with 'God save the King.' Hang the king! cried 'Brave Lochiel,' 'Should auld Acquaintance be forgot?' 'Let's rise and follow Charlie,' for 'Charlie is my darling.' That's right, quo' 'Charlie Stewart,' 'Up and war them a';' 'Let's hae the Stewarts back again.' However, notwithstanding its being 'Bonnie Chairlie's' ain call, he was instantly knocked down by 'Jock the brisk young Drummer,' who sang wi' much glee, 'Merry may the Maid be' that's 'Woo'd an' Married an' a'.'

We were now getting afraid lest 'Lewie Gordon' should interfere, for 'The Gordons had the Guiding o't.' He, 'Since the Peep o' Day,' came frae the "Haughs o' Cromdale,' and in a rear, with 'Johnnie Cope,' was whistling in a wicked e'e, 'The Sow's Tail to Geordie;' but 'Twas when the seas were roaring,' a sailor chanced to come in, singing *'Hearts of* Oak,' with 'Black-eyed Susan' in one hand and

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